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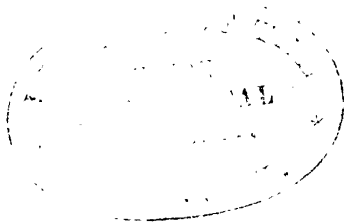
Spirit of faith : or

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH.

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THE SPIRIT OF FAITH;

OR,

What Must I Do to Believe?

Five Lectures

DELIVERED IN ST. PETER'S, CARDIFF,

BY THE

RT. REV. BISHOP HEDLEY, O.S.B.



NEW YORK :
THE CATHOLIC PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
No. 9 WARREN STREET.

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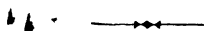
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THE SPIRIT OF FAITH;

OR,

WHAT MUST I DO TO BELIEVE?



I.

BELIEF A NECESSITY.

THE prevalence of the present warm discussions on Faith and Reason, on Belief, Knowledge, and Opinion, has doubtless arisen from many partial causes. It is partly that able and clear-seeing men have been trying to convince the crowd of what they see themselves—that it is inconsistent and foolish to hold fast to one set of beliefs whilst rejecting another for which there is quite as good ground and proof. It is partly that the experience of at least three hundred years has convinced inquirers that a revelation—especially an elaborate and complex revelation—without a perpetual living voice and tradition to guard and interpret it, must

be utterly inefficient and must surely crumble away. But it is also because men of wide and candid views have begun to feel that Belief of some kind will always be an absolute necessity for the human race. Unless every man and woman is to be a long-lived, gifted, leisured, candid, philosophic inquirer, some men and women must live by Belief. The fruit of this conviction has been various. Some teachers of mankind have anxiously attempted to show men what or whom to believe. Others have assured them they may believe without contradicting their reason. And others, again, have contented themselves with demolition and invective, speaking some hard truths and much crude error, loudly proclaiming that they will accept nothing but what they can see, and having no message for the masses except exhortation to make the most of the world they live in.

It is not my intention in these discourses to prove the existence of revelation, or of the Church of Christ. It is most useful and necessary to do both on occasion. But I am convinced that what many souls require is, not proof, but preparation. The evidence before them is plain enough ; what they lack is the power to see. And though this power

is a gift of God's grace, it is connected with a certain predisposition of heart and mind which we may call the Spirit of Faith. My object is to illustrate what one must *do* in order to believe; what moral and mental preparation we must have if we do not wish to walk blind in the midst of light. There are those who do not believe through indifference; who will not believe through mistaken pride or independence; who cannot believe (as they affirm), however much they long for Belief. And there are those also who do believe, and yet whose faith is in danger, not so much because they cannot prove it, or get it proved if need be, but because with them the moral and intellectual groundwork of faith is not firm; because the spirit of free thought, so-called progress, and undevout criticism has reached even the inside of the fold. |

In this and the four succeeding discourses it is my intention, then, to endeavor to explain what is meant by Faith and Belief, and what are their relations with the reasoning faculty of man, with his will, and with the supernatural grace of God; in other words, why men ought to believe and must believe; whether men can believe if they will;

whether Belief has anything to do with the ordinary acts of a man's reasoning faculty; and whether Belief is influenced in any way by that direct action of God which we call by the name of grace.

'Faith' is a word that has had a long history in this world. It has been the watchword of many a fight, the motive of many a sacrifice, the burden of many a prayer. Millions have held fast to Faith in their lives; thousands have testified to Faith by their deaths. Now Faith, or Belief, in its primary and elementary conception, is the acceptance of information on trust—on the word of another. If I have never been in London, I accept the fact that there is such a place as London, and I accept it on the word of another. If I have never tested the strength of wood and iron myself, still I confidently enter a railway carriage, trusting to what others have investigated and pronounced. But if I have visited London, and if I have a sufficient experimental knowledge of the materials used in carriage building, then I do not *believe* these things, but I *know* them.

It is evident, then, at the very outset of our inquiries, that Belief must, of its own

nature, play a very important part in human affairs. Consider the enormous number of things which must be taken on trust—on the word of another. The eye, the ear, the touch, are very limited faculties. That portion of this vast universe which they can tell us of is very narrow indeed. A man would never eat his food, or set his foot to the ground, or carry on any intercourse with his fellow-man, if he refused to believe. He takes it on trust that his bread is not poisoned ; that beasts and materials may be relied on ; that there are places for him to correspond with which he has never seen. The bond of civilisation is society ; man cannot rise to a civilised life, or keep in it, without the help and intercourse of other men. But society is held together by mutual trust and confidence. No man, as long as he is sane and sober, even demands ocular proof for everything he is called upon to accept. For things past he believes the word of his father and mother, or the accounts of those who have written histories. For things distant he accepts the report of his friends, of his correspondents, of the public journals. He trusts his tradesmen ; he confides in the word of the mechanic, the man of business, the

lawyer, the doctor. If he refuses to believe, he must shut himself up ; he must live a life that is no life, but only a savage existence ; or rather he must soon cease to live ; for unless a man believes he must die. It is obvious to say, that on these subjects the wisest man is he who trusts the least. But this is an exaggeration, which merely suggests the truth, that whilst a man finds it convenient to believe he must still exercise caution. The most cautious must always find it necessary to take upon trust infinitely more than he can examine and prove for himself.

Now it is not easy to imagine any one objecting to believe merely because he considers Belief to be an unworthy form of knowledge, or to be no knowledge at all. We cannot understand a person saying, ' If I cannot find out a thing for myself, I had rather not know it at all than take it on the word of another.' This would be mere stupidity. Information which comes on the word of another is real information in quite as true a sense as information which we derive from our own senses. If my friend or my newspaper—sources which I know I can trust—inform me that prices have risen in New York, or that a certain substance hither-

to unknown is good for food, or that the weather was fine or otherwise on such a day, at such a place, my information is surely as real, as solid, as useful, as if I had myself visited foreign lands and tested strange substances. There is only one question, and that is in regard to the trustworthiness of my sources. But that supposed, I need not hesitate, waver, or doubt. Nay, more. It frequently happens that under these circumstances I *cannot doubt*. There are many kinds of testimony, and many instances in which testimony is employed when the testimony is of such a sort as to compel assent. Let us suppose, for example, that a trustworthy friend walks into your house, and mentions that he left his home at such an hour, or that he met and spoke with such and such a person; you are obliged to believe him. You cannot help having that much additional knowledge. It is true that, by an extraordinarily violent mental effort, proceeding from some strong prejudice or prepossession, you may so confuse yourself as to doubt at last. But with your mind in a state of quietness and candor, on the first reception of the information you assent; the very make and texture of the human mind compels you. It is no more

possible for you, with your senses in their healthy state, to help seeing trees and houses when they stand before you and you look towards them in the daylight, than it is for your minds to doubt upon due and sufficient testimony. In short, Belief is as real a means of information, as satisfactory to the mind, and as cogent and effective in compelling assent, as any kind of knowledge whatever.

But I will go further, and say, that in many cases Belief is practically a much more useful kind of information than personal knowledge or experience. I do not mean to say that a person can be more certain of anything than of what he sees and hears and tests. But, in the first place, as we have already seen, it is impossible to test or apply our senses to one hundredth part of the things we must accept; and, in the second, what is required for practical life is *conclusions*, not facts or bits of experience. This is a very important consideration. An investor, for instance, wants to know the latest quotations on the Stock Exchange; he does not particularly want to know the hundreds of little bits of fact that enable a reporter to telegraph these quotations to the newspapers. If he were a reporter himself, he would have to go and use

his eyes and ears. Perhaps he would use them very badly ; the occupation might not suit him at all ; and he might be wrong in his practical summary and conclusions. But he goes to his newspaper and believes, and he has all he practically wants. Or, again, suppose that a man is ill in health, and wishes to know what to do. It is, perhaps, conceivable, and within the limits of physical possibility, that he should personally make such researches in chemistry, physiology, and medicine as would enable him to find out. But the thing is practically impossible ; that is to say, it is impossible to all but persons possessing such a combination of qualifications as is never found, or only found in the rarest cases. What he does is to consult a doctor, or at the least a book ; or he remembers what he has been told before ; or he puts together two or three facts and pieces of information acquired from books or instructors, and so decides. And it is to be observed, that the more he trusts to his own inferences (even though these inferences are grounded on what others have told him, as must be the case with most of them) the greater danger is there of his arriving at a false conclusion. The best thing he can do is to choose out an

expert, and simply believe him. The truth is, that most of the conclusions of practical life, on which we act every day and must continue to act, are highly complex, and are the results of an enormous amount of observation. We believe, for example, that the water supplied to our houses will not poison us, that the bread in the shops is not unfit for food, that stone will stand the weather better than wood, that foul smells in the streets mean fever; we believe that railroads, banks, docks, shipping, are good things; we advocate temperance, or trades-unions, or free trade, or the opposite. And we do this mostly on trust. There is not one man in a thousand of us who is capable of doing otherwise. The average man or woman of the workers and toilers of this world is not one who can either investigate facts or put them together when found out. Eyes and ears are not sharp enough, brain is not strong enough, life is not long enough, to allow any of us to make out a system, or even to investigate thoroughly and independently one single conclusion. Belief, therefore, is our resource, and we are wise in availing ourselves of Belief. It is the very condition of our daily life. We are like men who must sail over a

wide and tossing ocean, and must make no delay ; and we do not take our axes and go into the forest to cut down trees to build us ships ; we do not take our hammers and our appliances and toil for years to make a vessel that will not sail when it is made ; we do not ransack markets and stores for rigging and outfit ; but we step into a ship that others have made before we wanted it ; we trust plank and cord and mast ; we trust pilot and mariner ; and so we sail the sea of life.

These are general truths, and I have rather stated them than tried to explain them. Yet the statement of simple facts is often the best explanation of such facts. It is undoubtedly of the utmost importance to remember that the nature of man's mind and the conditions under which we live are such that Belief, or the taking of information on trust, must enter largely into our life. But—and here we approach our subject more closely—this important truth, which regards the whole of human life, has a very special application to all matters relating to worship, religion, and morality. Speaking broadly and practically, as we must do when speaking about the mass of mankind, we may say that no religious sys-

tem or worship, and no system of morality, is possible, without Belief.

In order to see this clearly, it seems to me that it is sufficient to consider for a moment what we mean by religion and morality. Religion means at least this—the acknowledgment of one Supreme Being, our Creator and our Last End, the loving Him with the whole heart, and the serving Him faithfully. Morality means the acknowledgment of a rule of right and wrong in our actions. Now if we grant that the existence of God may be dimly known by unassisted and personal reason, still the necessity for Belief is absolute. Take the attributes of the Supreme Being—our idea of His justice, mercy, purity, or power—and how far could the keenest reason of the longest-lived sage travel unassisted over such boundless regions of investigation? And would two men be found to agree when the investigation was concluded? And must the world be without intelligent belief in a God until long-lived sages have uttered their oracles, and those oracles have been found to agree? Set an ordinary man, with work and business, to find out and demonstrate whether the Supreme Being is infinitely just, or whether there is a future life, and, apart

from what he has from revelation, he will not know where to begin. The subject is too deep, and his faculties are too limited. If the matter had been one of eyes and ears, he might at least have made a start. But here he is like a man in a dense fog, and knows not which is the north and which the south. And, moreover, he has not the time which is necessary for such an inquiry. And if he had time and ability and inclination, yet it might chance—and the chance would be almost a certainty, considering the nature of man's mind and heart—that he would decide, not according to cool reason, but according to his own wish or want. Passion, temperament, character, circumstances, would be ready to prompt him, and to show him what he ought to say. And so there would either be no idea at all about God, or else there would be a chaos of contradictory opinions, whims, fancies, and daring assertions. And this would be true all through the list of those grave subjects which are included under the name of religion—such as the soul, the existence of evil, sin, and suffering. I do not speak of revealed religion; to that we shall come presently. We are here concerned solely with asserting the impossibility of any

religion at all for the mass of mankind without Belief. And it would be the same with what we call morality. If men were left to find out, each for himself, the rules of right and wrong, the sacredness of duty, the comparative merits of good deeds, and the essential element of virtue or of vice, we should again have a mere chaos. If every generation or every human being had to start afresh, and investigate whether murder was unlawful, whether theft was morally wrong, or whether to benefit one's neighbor was a good deed, each generation and each man might come to a right conclusion on some broad principles; but many men would certainly not do so; and there would be a shifting uncertainty and haziness about the rules of right and wrong, which would not tend to make this world a more agreeable place to live in. The mass of men must take their religion and their morality, as they take their daily bread, on trust. And, as a matter of fact, the mass of men have always done so. We need not count the barbarous races which have been, and which even now, perhaps, are, the majority of mankind. We know how they carry on their superstitions, their savage rites, their childish observances, from year to year, from

generation to generation, from century to century. They step into the beliefs of their fathers just as they dwell in their fathers' houses or tents; they take up their tribe's views of God and immortality, as they assume its garb and its weapons, its paint, its feathers, and its war-cry. No one questions, no one doubts. If there is a change, it is because some whimsical chief or despotic king orders them to change; whether they go on in senseless uniformity or break their tradition by an equally senseless innovation, it is always on trust and in belief. But if we turn from barbarism to comparative civilisation, we find it always the same. There are two or three instances, besides Christianity, of religious systems spreading widely among cultured or partially-cultured people. What is called Brahminism is one of the oldest forms of religious belief or practice in the world. The millions of the Indian peninsula adhere to it at this very day. It has had its vicissitudes, its heresies, its sects. But try to reckon the millions who have professed their adherence to it in the wide-spread Eastern lands where it has flourished through the thousands of years during which it has had a name in the world, and you may gather some

idea of how men take their religion on trust. Or look at Buddhism—the senseless Nihilism or Pantheism which contrived, some 2,500 years ago, to draw away followers from Brahminism, and whose members have grown to be well-nigh one-third of all the human beings on the earth at this moment. Of all these millions how many units are there who have not taken their opinions, as far as they have any, and their practices, such as they are, from some king's edict, from some preacher's word, from some ascetic's example, or from their father's or their mother's lips? Mahometanism, again, as long as it had any vitality at all, consisted mainly in a blind personal devotion to a man and to a book; the Moslem was and is a 'believer' who accepts a certain cry and practice here on earth, and looks for a hope and a reward in the heavens, because the Prophet and the Koran have said so. And to pass to Christianity, what has turned the best portion of the world to Christianity but belief and trust? and what holds Christians to their profession except the same? It is a point we shall have to discuss more closely later on; but I may remind you here that not only does the Catholic Church uniformly proceed on the idea that

men and women must be taught, that they cannot make out their religion or keep their religion unadulterated by their own thought and reflection, and that 'Belief' is the only practical way of getting Christianity into men's minds at all; but it seems to stand to reason that in no other fashion could the workers and strivers, and the little children, get hold of anything like steadfast and working principles of any kind. And this view, let us remember, is far from being upset by an appeal to that form of religious thought which claims the right to question everything—I mean, to Protestantism even in its most Protestant form. I make bold to say you never met a Protestant, were he as extreme as he could be, provided he held anything at all, who did not hold upon trust and take even his Protestantism at second hand. There may be here and there one who holds very little indeed, and who thinks he has made out for himself what he does hold. If such a one came under my own experience, I feel sure I could show him that even he was going on trust; that his demonstrations were only 'Belief' after all. But waiving this, is it not certain that the mass of Protestants get their religion from their catechisms, their

preachers, their newspapers, or their mothers? Is it not certain that if a Protestant were ordered to strip off all that he had received from another's hand, and to retain only what he had won and woven for himself, he would stand in a sorry plight? Men delight, it is true, in doubting, in calling in question established truth, and in setting themselves above authority; and, whatever the achievement is worth, they no doubt succeed in doing so. But they can only attack details—a point here and a point there. They always retain far more than they reject. They tear off shreds and they pick them to pieces; but they still go clothed. Or if by long and slow process men skilful of speech and sophism have persuaded the unlearned man to part with the garments his fathers handed down to him, it is only to make him put on clothes of a different make, but clothes all the same. Scepticism, or the rejection of all definite truth, may be theoretically possible, but not with the masses of mankind. And therefore they must have Belief.

And here comes on the great and vital question. If men must have Belief, or else have no religion, what must they do to believe safely and usefully? Is there any one

whom they can trust? Has Providence made them what they are, with such necessities and such deficiencies, and then left them to shift for themselves?

As I have already said, it is my object, not so much to prove, or to engage in controversy, as to explain and prepare. I have to point out the Spirit of Belief—what you must be, what you must do, what you must have, and whither you must bend your gaze, if you would believe.

In the first place, then, you must see that it is highly probable that God would speak, or make a revelation. A man who is expecting a thing will be sure not to miss it when it comes. The sailor who keeps his eye anxiously on the horizon will catch sight of the ship he wants to see the moment her mast-head is above the horizon. The watcher of the skies, who peers in the night hours through his telescope for the coming star, will see it and note it the moment its edge is projected on his glass. The child who watches at the window for its father in the dusk, or who listens from a sick-bed for his step, will know the instant he is there. If there is a God at all, no one can doubt that He must be a God who cares for and who

loves the things that He has made, and who loves most and cares most for the beings whom He has endowed with a reason to know Him and a will which is bound to love Him more than any other thing. He could not be a God who should sit in the heavens—in some serene regions above the changes and the storms of the earth and the air—and take no heed to the hearts in which He had implanted the divine fire of a longing love for Himself. To have made rational creatures at all was a wonder that only his own limitless power can explain, and that mysterious love which the Infinite can shed upon the finite. And, having made them, why should He stay His hand at their birth? Why should He leave them in the conditions which the mere fact of being made involved? Why should he not go on as lavishly as He had begun; and having gifted them with being, for no reason beyond the effusiveness of His love, adorn them with gifts above being and nature, out of the same constraining yet most free generosity? When the rich man builds him a house on a spot which he has chosen, he builds because he chooses; the place, the view, the wood, the water, and the air have pleased him, and he builds that he

may live there. And having built, he does not turn his back on the palace which his love has imagined and his treasure created, but he dwells there and spends himself upon it still. As he made it and it is his, so he loves to adorn and glorify it. Whither should his fancy turn or his plenteous wealth flow except to the spot where he first felt that his heart could be satisfied? So, if God has made us, there is no cause to wonder at His wishing to do still more for us. He was not necessitated to do more. But it seems to me that when we contemplate Him creating, we know, we feel, that He will not stop there. Creation itself, which reason inexorably proves, is such a stupendous 'revelation,' so to speak, that the mind of the earnest man, having somewhat grasped its immense significance, stands waiting with an awestruck certainty for those further demonstrations which he knows will come, of that ineffable motive cause which (if we dare speak in such a human way) urged the Infinite to utter the fiat which made the worlds. In one word, from the mere fact that God has made man it is extremely probable that He would help him, teach him, benefit him, more than his mere nature could require or expect.

And it would seem that it was for this reason He left in man's soul a capacity, a receptivity, a sort of vague want, which called for more knowledge and more power. The want was not imperious. Man *could* have lived without more, but not *well* lived. The palace of the Great Builder had been fashioned with spaces and heights, with great vaulted halls and mighty foundations for towers and pinnacles, which awaited, in dumb show of supplication, new plans and new lavishness—the color, the gold, the glory of a transformation. Man's soul, limited as it is, has a vague yearning to know God better; a vague vision of secrets beyond matter, beyond life; a burning wish for immortality, and a panting restlessness to know what will come when the body shall be dissolved. It cannot find out much for itself. It can, perhaps, make out a glimpse here and an inference there. It may spend the years of its allotted mortality in researches, and may make a fresh step each year it seeks. But it cannot get the key of the mysteries which lie around it; it cannot pierce the veil which hangs down on the other side of the grave; and if it find the heavenly fire and light its torch at the flame, death comes, and the torch drops in the dust

and the light is lost again to the world. And God has allowed the human race to feel this. Although, as we shall presently see, He never did leave mankind without a supernatural revelation, yet there have been periods and races—long periods and widespread races—in which man's own wrong-doing has obscured that revelation. From the records of these times and races we know that the human heart, left to itself, when not brutalized by passion and bad custom, is uneasy without revelation and grace. The best minds sighed for God. Human nature, represented by what was noblest among men, groped¹ hither and thither, seeking for God, if perchance it should find Him. Like the Hebrew singer in the days of his dark fortune, it cried to God from the wilderness, 'O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day. For Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee my flesh, O how many ways! In a desert land, and where there is no way and no water.'² If we had not Christ's light, such would be our condition and our cry, unless we were grovelling on the earth in sensual sin. And therefore I have said, that the mere fact of being what

¹ Acts xvii. 27.² Ps. lxii. 1-3.

we are seems to point to the certainty that God will interfere some way to help us, teach us, and raise us up.

And this He has done by giving us what is called revelation. When we speak of revelation, we mean that God has spoken to us, either Himself or by His ministers—His prophets, apostles, or evangelists. We mean that He has told us things which our reason, though He gave us our reason, could or would never have found out for itself. We mean that He has given us information which we are to take upon trust—trusting to Him. This information is of two kinds; or rather it regards two classes of subjects. First, there are those matters about which we should have been able to find out something for ourselves even without His supernatural revelation; for instance, His own existence, the spirituality of our souls, and our immortality; as also what are the broad rules of right and wrong. On these matters we should have been able to know *something* by the light of our reason. But what we knew would have been so fragmentary, so much mixed up with error, so difficult to get at, and so hard to keep, that practically the mass of men would hardly

have known it all. And therefore God has revealed much on these subjects, and told us clearly and simply so much precious truth about Himself and His attributes, about our souls and the life to come, that the poor man and woman, and the little child, have no difficulty in coming to the knowledge of what will guide their lives aright. But there is another class of subjects on which God has spoken to us. He has revealed to us—and here the word ‘revealed’ is used in its full and complete meaning—things so deep and grand, things so hidden and so impossible to predict, that only Himself could have revealed them. They are called mysteries ; and they comprise such truths as the Three Persons in the Godhead, the taking flesh of the Eternal Son, the coming of the Holy Ghost, the beatific vision after death, and other ‘profound things of God.’

This is what we mean by Revelation ; and we take it upon trust from God. He has spoken, and we believe ; and once we believe, we know it as well as if we had made it out for ourselves ; nay, as I remarked above, practically we know it a great deal better.

But you will say, Are we sure that God *has* spoken ?

Two classes of persons may ask this question; those who really doubt whether God has spoken, and those who already believe, but who want to be able to give an answer to those who ask them. Are we sure, then, that God has spoken?

I answer that we are quite sure. You must admit that it is, in the first place, highly probable that God would wish to speak to man and to reveal to him things which his natural reason would not have found out, but which, nevertheless, his reason had a dumb blind knowledge of—as a blind man has a knowledge of the sun. You must admit also that Almighty God could easily make His wishes or His revelation known to man. The God who made us would surely find it possible and easy to speak to us when He chose. There are many whose unwillingness to believe arises from not seeing how likely it is that God would speak, and how easy it is for Him to speak if He chooses. But if we fully admit the probability and the possibility that God has spoken, we find at hand a positive proof that He has spoken. There is a book called the New Testament. Looking at that book, not as inspired, but merely as an ordinary his-

tory, we cannot doubt, first, that a man called Jesus Christ did once live ; secondly, that He asserted He was sent by God to teach God's revelation ; thirdly, that He worked great miracles in proof of what He said ; fourthly, that He rose again from the dead ; and fifthly, that a great number of persons accepted what He said and believed in Him. Now I know that a few learned men have denied some of these things. But the greater number of learned men accept them. And as for those who deny them, it is quite clear that they do so because they deny both the probability and the possibility that God should speak to man ; and in many cases it is because they do not really admit there is a true God at all. I boldly assert that no man who opens the New Testament, previously admitting the probability and possibility of revelation, will hesitate to accept the facts which the New Testament relates. And if he does not admit the probability and possibility of revelation—that is, of God's speaking to man in a way beyond the information given by mere natural reason—he cannot admit there is an infinitely wise, good, and powerful God ; and therefore he cannot admit a God at all.

It is a fact, therefore, that God has spoken. I could begin from this present century, and show you how in every century—nay, in every quarter of a century—up to the time of the New Testament, when Christ Jesus lived, there is testimony that He brought God's revelation to man. A thing which we can trace up like this is certain. It has been handed down from age to age.

We began by saying that men must believe a great deal—that is, take a great deal on trust—or they could not live in this world. We saw how especially this was true in the case of worship and religion. Belief, then, which is so necessary for mankind, is also possible for them. The great Almighty Maker who formed them has also spoken to them; and their wisest course, their bounden duty, is to believe His word. If they must take their religion in a great measure on trust, He it is whom they are to trust. The Eternal Teacher sits and teaches for evermore. Human princes and human sages have commanded and have searched out, and men have been none the better or the wiser. But to those who have ears to hear the voice of the Lord there is light and wisdom and peace.

II.

THE NEW-TESTAMENT TEACHING AS TO WHAT FAITH IS.

The obedience of faith. ROM. i. 5.

IN the last discourse I explained what it is to believe, and I showed that Belief, in religious matters, means taking upon trust a large number of truths relating to God, His worship and His law; and taking them on trust because He has spoken. It might seem to some that it was not necessary to take so many words to explain this. But to me it seems that there are numbers of people in this country who either do not believe because they think Belief is a slavery, and unworthy of them, or only half believe, because they have a sort of fear that Belief will not bear investigation, and that the less you think about your Belief the more likely you are not to quarrel with it. Therefore it was

useful to show that Belief is a necessity for mankind, especially in religious matters, and to point out briefly (what would take volumes to develop fully) the complete certainty we have that God Himself has spoken to the world and left us His Word.

You may, perhaps, expect that now I shall proceed to show you where and how God's voice is to be heard, and to explain the authority of Holy Scripture, and of the teaching Church which is revealed in Holy Scripture. This, however, is not precisely my purpose in these instructions. Doubtless it is most important that we should see that God has left His Church as the depositary, the guardian, and the interpreter of His divine revelation, which would otherwise be useless for the masses of mankind. And doubtless also, during the ensuing remarks, I may throw some light on the Church's claims, which will tend to conciliate those who dispute them. But my chief purpose at present is to inquire, not so much where God's revelation is, as what sort of a revelation it is; in what sort of a spirit we should seek it, and what we should do in order to make it out for ourselves, and get hold of it. **To look for revelation is to look for something**

divine ; and to attain it we must understand something of God's ways. Faith—for that is the name by which we call belief in revelation—is a gift, an act of the mind which very much depends on the state of the mind itself. We must, therefore, examine in what shape God will speak or will appear. And we shall find the answer to our question chiefly in the pages of the New Testament.

It sometimes happens that a man who walks out into the country to look for some house to which he has been directed, comes upon it and goes by it without knowing that it is the one he is in search of. And sometimes, after hearing about a place for years, and for years longing to visit it, when at last we get there and actually see it, our anticipations are disappointed, and the reality is very little like what we expected to find. It is a great thing for a searcher to be sure of what he is looking for. And when the human heart is searching for its God, there is a special care and attention necessary in order not to take some false image of God for God Himself. The mightiness and majesty of Jehovah is utterly and infinitely different from the mightiness and grandeur of

man. God cannot show Himself as He is; for if He did, the heavens and the earth would flee away, and be no more. But, at the same time, when He does reveal Himself, He does not ordinarily show Himself in the form and the trappings of that glory and power which are human. He does not want to be taken for His own creatures. He does not wish to be measured by the height of those infinitesimal mole-hills of the earth which man takes for great mountains. If He cannot show Himself in His own glory, at least He will not put on the glory of man. He would rather choose the things 'that are not'—the things which men call weakness, baseness, poverty, and lowliness—that so His real glory and real power might stand the less chance of being misunderstood by those who had eyes to see. A man who has accustomed himself to call things by the name which the undisciplined and sinful human heart is in the habit of calling them will easily pass by God, even at the moment when God is very near him. When Elias stood on the top of Carmel the Lord passed by him. There was a great and strong wind before the Lord, overthrowing the mountains and breaking the rocks in pieces; the Lord was not in the wind. And

after the wind, an earthquake ; and the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire ; the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, the whistling of a gentle air. And Elias heard the gentle wind, and he knew it was the Lord. And he came out from the cave, where the storm and the thunder had driven him, and he covered his face with his mantle, and stood there at the cave's threshold listening to the words of the Lord.¹ He is the type of the heart that knows where to see God. But most men act otherwise. They take the flash and the noise and the rush of some earth storm for the manifestation of God. They are the men who in olden times could not understand why Noe worked so patiently for a hundred years at the Ark. If they had met a wandering Eastern tribe in the deserts of Arabia carrying the Ark of the Covenant, they would have despised them and passed by. If they had found their way to Bethlehem on the night of the Nativity, they would have thought they had made a mistake. They were the men who met Jesus Christ by the lake of Galilee, in the streets of Jerusalem, under the porches of the temples, and saw in Him nothing but a mechanic, or

¹ 3 Kings xix. 11

an enthusiast, or a man possessed by the devil. They are those who in all ages have cried out 'Foolishness!' when they have had the Gospel preached to them. For God is 'a hidden God.'² It is His pleasure to disguise Himself. Yet let us beware what we say. Which, after all, would be the more complete disguise—that God should wrap Himself in the semblance of miserable human pomp and greatness, or should come, as He does come, lowly, meek, and poor? Hath not the mind eyes to see the true greatness under the humble outside? Nay, is it not true, is it not certain from the story of the past, that the poor and despised instruments to whom God has entrusted Himself upon the earth are ever and again found conquering the power and pride of the world; crushing, breaking up, pushing aside, or subduing to themselves the forces which seemed to be so mighty and so absolute? If we look aright, we can tell the power of God under its seeming disguises. But the wisdom which does not fix its end in the heavens, and which lives in this world as if this world were its home and its final destiny, and which calls things by the names of the earth, is sure to

² *Isaias* xlv. 15.

go astray when it begins, as it thinks, to look for God and God's ways.

The truth of this is never more clearly seen than in the case of multitudes in this country who are looking for, or perhaps think that they have found, what they call the Gospel. They take certain big and sounding names from the world's vocabulary, and measuring by them the revelation of God, they accept as much as they can cover with these names. Wealth and material power are names which earthly wisdom bows before; and is it not true they go a long way in helping men to choose their form of Christianity? But if you say these are vulgar notions, and educated and refined minds are far above measuring truth by power to strike and power to pay, I say that there are other words as dangerous and as false. Liberty, Independence, Progress, Free Inquiry—these are some of the notions which numbers of people bring to test the Gospel by. If they find any form of religion, like the Catholic Church, in which these names are not held in high esteem (at least as understood by them), then, like the Jews of old, they are straightway "scandalised." It cannot be true. It cannot be meant for them. Freedom is a glorious privi-

lege. Progress is the inalienable birthright of the human race. Independence is the prerogative of man's noble nature. And being full of views like these, they settle down with such scraps of God's word as seem to suit.

It is no wonder if men who look for God's truth through such glasses as these do not see it in the Catholic Church. They have altogether misconceived what I call the 'spirit' of Faith. And it is well that we should try to understand what that spirit is.

When Moses, in the solitude and the gloom of Arabian deserts, came suddenly, as he drew near to Horeb, on the startling apparition of the flaming bush, he said, 'I will go and see this great sight.' And he loosed his shoes from his feet, and hid his face. That is a figure of the soul's behavior in the presence of God's revelation. The spirit of Faith is before all things the spirit of lowliness of mind. It is because so many men do not know what lowliness of mind is that they have no practical notion of what it is to have Faith.

What is the meaning of God's revelation to man? It means that He has spoken in order to let man know things which he did not know, which he was always confusing, or

which he could never have found out for himself; things so important that without the knowledge of them his last end would be frustrate; things therefore of vital moment about God Himself, the dispensation of the world's salvation through Jesus Christ, the means of remission of sins and of sanctification, and the true path to the bliss of the heavens. Revelation is the light of man, but it is also the voice of God. It means the most wonderful condescension on the part of God. It means the opening of heaven's doors—the admission to the secret things of God's majesty. The revelation which is in the world is dimly figured by that *Shekina*—that glory which dwelt in the temple of Sion—before which the Hebrew priest bowed down and adored. Revelation cannot be approached except in an attitude of what may be called the lowliness of worship. We come to it, not to criticise it, not to improve it, but to learn and to act. We cannot afford to lose one jot or one tittle of the precious light. The temper of the believer is the temper of Moses with unshod feet prostrate before the mysterious Voice in the wilderness.

If we turn now to the New Testament, we

shall find that this was the view taken of revelation by those who, we must admit, knew best how to describe it. Let us first take our Lord and Saviour Himself. Every one must have observed how absolute, peremptory, and magisterial He is in His proclamation of His holy doctrine. He takes His seat and speaks as one having authority. He is called the Master and the Teacher. He does not propose His doctrine as a subject of discussion or investigation; He exacts it as an obedience. He does not want inquisitive doubters, who will toss His words from one to another; He demands a following of devout disciples. He does not discuss; He appeals sometimes to one or two obvious proofs of His mission and divinity; but He contents Himself for the most part with the word of rebuke, of reproach, of exhortation, or of command. He has not come to argue with the world, but to subdue the world. He points His finger and He says, 'Come after Me!' 'Hear me!' 'Take My yoke upon you!' 'Learn of Me!' He wants men who will obey. His favorite type is a 'little child.' He speaks of His teaching as the Kingdom of God—a significant name; a mere philosopher would have called it a sys-

tem or a theory—and He declares that none can come to it or enter it except those who become ‘little children.’ It is the Kingdom of God, because to believe is, first of all and above all, to submit our minds to the claims of the God who made us. And none but ‘little children’ can enter, because to make this necessary submission of the heart there must be a single-mindedness, an openness to truth, an absence of prejudice, such as is most fitly typified in a young and innocent child. He reasoned, indeed, at times; it would be simply false to say that the work of reasoning is not most important, under God’s ordinary providence, as a preliminary to Faith. But when he gave proofs they were proofs of His mission (as I have said) and of His divinity; for His doctrine He merely gave them His word, as He sat on the hill-side, or stood in the boat of Peter, or walked in the porches of the Temple. And the souls who believed in Him bowed down before Him as they did so. The glance of His eye, the tone of His voice, the gesture of His arm, the words that he spake and the works he did—these drew the multitudes after Him. Some will say this was unreasonable in Him and rash in the be-

lievers. But they had *sufficient* proof, putting prejudice and passion aside; and it always has been, and is, and always will be, that the crowd must not only have its mind enlightened to see good reasons, but must have its heart impressed, before it can thoroughly take them. The Hebrew leader took the shoes from off his feet, and then saw the vision. And so Jesus, in His teaching, laid so great a stress on 'poverty of spirit,' humility, and simplicity. He had been prophesied as a king, and as a king He came. For those who brought gifts to Him and bowed themselves down, to them He gave His light and His truth.

The Apostles of our Lord, His first heralds and His commissioned preachers, took the same view of what faith is as their Lord and Master. Saint Stephen, standing before the Jewish councils, called the Jews a 'stiffnecked people'³—that is, a race which would not bend to the yoke of belief. Saint Peter declares that the preachers of the Gospel preached what they were inspired to preach by the Holy Ghost.⁴ Saint James exhorts the twelve tribes to be 'swift to hear' the word of God, which is able to save their

³ Acts vii. 51.

⁴ 1 Peter i. 12.

souls, and to receive it 'with meekness.'⁵ And no one can require to be told how Saint Paul demands from his hearers the assent of Faith as a duty and a virtue. It is most true that Saint Paul argues and discusses; but here is the very reason of the gravity of his testimony. He reasons; he never shirks discussion, or tries to shuffle out of a difficulty. But with all that he lets his hearers feel that with him Faith means something more than an answer, or a definition, or the conclusion of a syllogism. He lets them know that if they refused to hear him they were resisting and despising 'not man but God.'⁶ In the very opening verses of the great argumentative epistle of justifying Faith—the Epistle to the Romans—he calls Faith 'an obedience.'⁷ It is an idea that occurs over and over again in the epistles. Take as a sample that passage in 2 Corinthians: 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but powerful through God to the destruction of fortifications, subverting of counsels, and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every understanding to the obedi-

⁵ James i. 21.⁶ Thess. iv. 8.⁷ Romans i. 5.

ence of Christ.'* The preaching of the Gospel, in its effects on the minds of the hearers, is like the advance of an army on a fortified town or a camp strongly entrenched. It means overturning, throwing down, destroying. Heights are stormed, plans upset, devices brought to nothing. What fortified heights are there? What counsels and loftiness of thought? None other than the human wisdom which comes to the Gospel to criticise before it will submit. The state of mind which Saint Paul expects to find in the true believer is a 'captivity of the understanding,' 'an obedience.' It is quite plain that Saint Paul would have had little sympathy with independence of thought and free inquiry. He would have said, as indeed he did say, to the philosopher as to the uninstructed, 'You are a poor weak creature, standing in need of light to save your soul by; I have that light, for to me is committed the truth of God; bow your knee, bend your head, and hear what I say, and having heard, go and put it in practice.' And it is easy to see that if Faith meant a 'captivity' of the mind and an 'obedience'

* 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

of the heart to the Thessalonians and the Corinthians, it means the same thing to Englishmen in the nineteenth century. The early hearers of Saint Paul seem, in some instances, to have been difficult to persuade that the spirit of lowly-mindedness was the right spirit : just as an Englishman now. But Saint Paul insisted. He told them he knew that 'wisdom' and 'prudence' were great words in their mouths; but it was just this 'wisdom of the wise' which was to be destroyed, just this 'prudence of the prudent' which was to be rejected. 'Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?' It was the 'foolishness of preaching' which was to save them that believe.* In other words, for Faith there was required a bowing down or submission of the mind to what seemed at first sight folly. The great Apostle had passed through the fiery trial himself. It was the process of his own conversion that he was describing when he said that Faith meant the humbling of the heart. Before Saul believed in the Lord Jesus he was smitten to the ground and lay prostrate in the dust. When God's mercy overtook him that day on 'the road near to Damascus, it was not

* 1 Cor. i. 19, 21.

in the shape of a proof or a discussion. The power of God struck down his body, and at the same moment humbled his heart ; and as he lay upon the ground he cried out from the depths of his newly-found humility, ' O Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? ' ¹⁰ He was converted, though he knew no creed or catechism yet. The Voice that pierced his heart did not go on to instruct him. Any instrument could do that now. Poor Ananias could tell him all he needed to know. The work was done ; for the proud doctor, the learned Pharisee, the busy and strenuous defender of his sect, was humble, obedient, and contrite of heart.

The New Testament teaching and practice, then, in regard to the great and fundamental virtue of Faith, appears to be briefly as follows : He who wishes to prepare himself for Faith must become as a ' little child.' Of such is the kingdom of heaven. A child has no prejudices. It has no strong passions. It does not scheme and contrive for self. It is simple, open, and single-minded. Such must be the believer. You will say : If a child is all this, still it remains true that a child is more frequently deceived than a shrewd and

¹⁰ Acts ix. 6.

grown-up man or woman. Yes; but the question is, not what is the best preparation for escaping falsehood, but what is the way to prepare for truth. God's revelation is a torch which He has lighted Himself. It was His business to see to that. It is ours to tear the bandages from our eyes, and lift them up from the earth to where the brightness gleams. A man need not be a shrewd reasoner, need not be a great philosopher, reader, thinker, or scholar, to be able to make out God's revelation. He need only be guileless, unprejudiced, earnest. You will say, Then how is it so many in this world miss God's light? Because they are sinful, prejudiced (though not always by their own fault), or indifferent. Because they come, not to submit, but criticise; to discuss and to pass sentence. This is the wrong spirit. It is a spirit that will, perhaps, save them from a mistake here and there; from an error more or less in some matter of detail. But when they have criticised and questioned and settled everything (if they ever settle anything), they will be as far from the burning bush as ever. They will not have bowed the head. They will be like men who calmly stand and watch the rising flood when they should be

swimming for their lives. They measure and observe, they note their lines and their angles ; and all the time the waters they should boldly breast are rising dark and hungry round them, till it is too late to swim away and be saved.

In the second place, the New Testament teaches us that Faith is an obedience. Obedience is a word men do not like. Yet far the greater part of the world must obey outwardly ; and if a man obey outwardly, and not with the inward spirit also, he is either a coward or a hypocrite. We must not only accept the Gospel, we must 'obey' it—as St. Paul says.¹¹ Other teachers state their doctrines and their theories, and persuade mankind to adopt them. No speaker, pleader, or philosopher ever dares to say 'Obey me,' save only he who speaks in God's name. Here, acceptance is not merely a reasonable thing—it is a duty ; and resistance is rebellion and sin. A man who comes to revelation with the idea that he will please himself what he accepts and what he rejects has not mastered the very elementary notion of what is Faith. He must come prepared to bow to revelation the moment he sees it. And if you say that every reasonable man would wish to do this

¹¹ Romans i. 5

—*if* he could only see it—I answer, it is more uncommon than you suppose. There are many who never think of bowing their hearts to God, even to God as far as they know Him; and how can they expect that He will enlighten them to know Him better? There are many who are strong in theoretical obedience, and who think they would obey if they could hear the voice of God. But they have never made themselves feel that perhaps He may, really and actually, let them hear Him. They think of Him as afar off. They are like the men who picture themselves treading burning sands and suffering heroic hardships in far-off Africa; but never let the cold air in upon themselves to test their endurance at home. They think they would obey God, but they never pray to Him. A virtue is no virtue until it is sublimated into an habitual prayer. And the obedience which many men think they would pay to God's voice is proved to be but a phantom or a fancy, because they are such utter strangers to lowly heartfelt worship altogether. When the poor beggar cried out, 'O Lord, that I may see!' Jesus opened his eyes. Many men's eyes are shut because they let Jesus pass by and never with longing heart cry to Him to help them.

And, thirdly, the Spirit of Faith must be one which looks for a 'captivity.' Free-thought and Faith are as opposite as light and darkness. The real consistent free-thinkers know this, and do not care to hide it. But there are multitudes of well-meaning people in the world who want to believe and yet be free to think as they please. This cannot be. God's revelation means a certain amount of definite information about the most weighty matters, and a certain number of rules called commandments. By one part of His revelation a check is laid on free speculation; by another, on license of action. Faith is no mere vague feeling or pious sentiment. It is information. And all information limits the freedom of thought, and ought, if right were always done, frequently to limit the freedom of action. When the mind knows the rules of arithmetic, it is unable to think anything which contradicts them. When we are told that a war has commenced on the Continent, or a prince has spoken, or a parliament has come to a resolve, conjecture and speculation on those precise points come to an end. When a man wakes and finds himself on the side of a precipice, he thanks the welcome dawn that has let him

know it. He must perforce walk the other way; his freedom is restricted; but he will not now be dashed to pieces. Thus revelation is restraint. It puts a yoke upon the wanderings of the human intellect. It checks the flight of the imagination, and saves mankind a thousand wild and pernicious errors on the gravest of all questions. But is this a 'yoke' or a 'captivity'? Is it not rather freedom and emancipation? Faith marks out certain boundaries, outside of which lie darkness and danger. But, on the other hand, it is a light which opens a new space to us. It beckons us to discoveries we never should have dreamt of. It gives us a new country. It is as if a princely leader placed himself at the head of peasants and oppressed workers, and led them out from their poverty and their wretched homes to a new Western land, with mighty streams and grand plains and lofty snow-clad hills, full of plenty and of beauty: For no one knows what Faith can tell him until he has placed its light yoke upon his neck. No one can know how much is contained in the creeds of the Church and the Holy Scriptures, until he takes them with worshipful respect and reads them with believing love. The Christian revelation is as

the light of the sun. If it did not exist, it would be necessary to create it. It is so full of light and guidance, of thought for great thinkers and for little thinkers, of food for great minds and for smaller minds, that although it says on many points 'Thus far and no farther,' yet it is freedom, growth, and health to the soul. For it is not restraint that stunts the soul; but it is license which ruins it. Large space, free air, and the rains of heaven will make the forest trees grow; and if the hand of the forester interfere with skill, they will grow all the better. But when they crowd together, and when every evil growth is allowed to choke them, then the more the rains fall and the sun shines the wilder, the poorer, the more useless, and the more mean will age and growth make every tree.

Having thus seen what sort of a spirit is the Spirit of Faith or Belief in God's revelation according to the New Testament, let us make one reflection in conclusion.

If an earnest man wanted to be a believer, in the sense of our Lord and St. Paul, I know not whither he could turn except to the Catholic Church. He must take some authority. He cannot stop at his Bible—for his Bible is

a book which does not explain itself. His Bible is a book which contains the revelation about God, the Trinity, the Incarnation, Sacraments, Sin, Justification, Sanctification ; but there are a hundred contradictory opinions what the Bible means by them, and the Bible does not explain itself. And therefore an earnest man, especially if he a busy working man or woman, with little or no book-learning, is almost as badly off with his Bible alone as without his Bible at all. And he cannot go to any of the churches, sects, communions, or persuasions outside the Catholic Church, because they, one and all, will tell him they have no authority to explain the Bible. They will not claim power to teach. They will say, We will assist you, but you must find out for yourself. You must discuss, criticise, choose, reject, and so form your religious creed. And thus you must not come as a 'little child;' you will not have to 'obey;' and your opinions will be no 'captivity' to you, because you can revise them and even throw them aside at any moment. And when he hears this he will know that their idea of Faith is very different from that of our Lord and Saint Paul. His first object, therefore, will be to find a Church which *pro-*

fesses to teach with authority. And it is this which the Catholic Church professes to do.

Catholicism professes to *teach*. Our Lord left a commission to the body of pastors to 'teach all nations' with magisterial power. To them was delivered a body of truth, comprised chiefly in the Scriptures. This body of truth they have to guard, to interpret, and to develop, as occasion may require. They, and their chief Pastor by himself, have the power to speak infallibly on matters of belief and morality. Their creeds, therefore, and their solemn rulings are as the Word of God, which he who wishes to be a believer must accept as a 'yoke.'

She also professes to teach mysteries—that is, difficult and obscure truths that we cannot make out more than a very short way. And so she expects humility of mind and bowing down of the heart.

And the Catholic Church admits no doubting, no examining in matters once fully decided. She could not do so, and still profess to be God's living witness. 'Grounded, settled, and immovable'¹²—these are the words of Saint Paul, which the Spirit of Truth inscribes upon her banner.

¹² Coloss. i. 23.

And lastly, the Catholic Church professes to be an enemy of what men call progress in religious matters. Christianity is not like earthly discoveries or sciences; a science which a fallible man, slightly in advance of his fellows, gains glory by inventing, and which other fallible men painfully bring to perfection. Progress in science means the reversing of old notions, the application of new discoveries. It is true there is a kind of progress in revelation—a progress like the advance of the seedling to the state of the perfect tree. But it is a progress along given lines, within given bounds, without contradiction to the past. This progress the Catholic Church admits and promotes. But to those who would explain away the Bible, alter the meaning of the Incarnation, or disprove the existence of God, she opposes an attitude that is unchangeable. And so the aspirant to Faith should not be astonished or repelled if he finds that he must submit his views to her views. To the Spirit of Faith, novelties are dangerous, private crochets are distasteful; anything which does not grow on the old tree is rotten fruit. The grand central pivots or hinges of truth have been settled once for all by revelation; the Catholic Church will not

and cannot alter them. She holds her teaching up, unchangeable, before the world; and those alone who bow before her have the Spirit of Faith.

This is not intellectual slavery. In one sense every mind, as I have said, must be a slave to the truth. It is no real freedom to allow a man to make as many mistakes as he likes. But, besides, the mind of a man who submits to the Catholic Church, having got definite and consistent notions about the most important matters, can afford to think and speculate over a thousand matters that a consistent Protestant, who had to make out his Faith for himself, could never get to. Putting Faith on one side, how much more consistent, dignified, and thorough would newspapers and books be if they all started from settled and consistent religious belief! And how fertile would intellectual men find those creeds and dogmas which they are afraid of now! As it is, the enormous books which Catholic theologians have written about theology show how grand a field they find it. What would be the result now, with all our bookmaking and increased culture? And belief in the Catholic Church is not an uneasy constraint. It does not bind up a man like the swathing bands

wrap a mummy. It rather clothes him as with a graceful and easy robe. Belief, being perfectly natural to us all, comes to be perfectly natural in religious matters. And the truth is that Protestants believe quite as truly as Catholics, though it is against their principles. They believe their clergymen, their newspapers, their favorite books, or their friends.

If men must believe—as they must and will—it would seem right there should be a body of men trained in religious matters—devout, earnest, and leaning on the past—to direct their belief. Otherwise, they will be at the mercy of every self-made minister, self-taught preacher, and illiterate spouter, who may choose to lead them captive. Such a body of men we believe there is in the pastors of the Catholic Church—with whom Christ has promised to remain, and to send His Spirit to remain, all days, even to the end of the world.

But this much is certain: that until men come to recognize that Faith means an obedience, a taking up of a yoke, a bowing of the head, a humbling of the heart, there will be no such thing as Faith. There are numbers at this moment who call themselves believers,

who only believe through habit, and who hold themselves ready to discuss or criticise whenever they seem called upon to do so. And therefore there are numbers who seem to believe, yet the spirit of whose Faith is dead or languishing unto death. Let the inquirer procure for himself, by God's help, the Spirit of Faith, and his catechism will not give him much trouble to learn. And let the believer pray that his Faith may be quickened, that his heart may be ever ready to submit, and his mind to learn, and his soul will stand firm in the midst of the shock of controversy and the gainsayings of all enemies whatsoever.

III.

PREJUDICE AS AN OBSTACLE TO FAITH.

THE Spirit of Faith, as we have seen, is a spirit of lowliness—of childlike obedience and of ‘captivity.’ If the heart of man were always as Almighty God made it and constituted it in His first dealings with His creatures, man would have no difficulty in obeying and submitting to the word of revelation. There would be little or no error, because there would be the light, and the heart prepared to see the light. But, as a matter of fact, we know that if God’s revelation be in the world, there are, and always have been, a multitude of men who, with more or less obstinacy, do not see it, and do not accept it. I have hinted at the causes of this; but now it is necessary to look more closely into man’s heart, and try to discern what it is that constitutes blindness in matters of Faith. For the state of the soul which resists revelation, or any part of it, is called blindness, as being a state of ignorance and error; it is called

rebellion, as being a resistance to lawful authority; it is called carnal, earthly, and diabolical wisdom, as being anti-supernatural; and sin, as being a state of enmity to God and spiritual death.

It is a difficulty with many persons to see how Faith can have anything to do with the will, and how Unbelief can be a wilful sin. If God's revelation is plain to be seen, they say, we can see it; if it is not plain, we cannot see it, and that is an end of it.

I am not denying that Faith is, as a mental act, elicited, not by the will, but by the intelligence. Faith is a 'conviction,' an 'argument' (that is, the result of reasonable premises). It is distinct from knowing or seeing; but only because knowing or seeing means direct personal contact with something, whilst Faith means knowing on the word of another. Indeed, the act of Faith, considered as a mental act, consists of two acts: first, the knowing or seeing that God, who cannot deceive nor err, has spoken; and this is an act of knowledge; and secondly, the accepting the truths that He has thus manifested, which is Faith properly so-called. In regard to the first of these acts, reasoning must, of course, precede. It must be proved that God has

spoken, and that the Catholic Church is His voice and organ. These proofs may be of various kinds. There are, for instance, the proofs based on the consideration of what man is and requires, of God's goodness and power to do as He pleases. There are, again, the direct proofs of a revelation having been given; proofs of the existence and mission of Moses, of the occurrence of miracles, of our Lord's mission and character, and of the signs that He wrought. And, lastly, there are the proofs of the divine office and endowments of the Church which He has left in the world. All these proofs may be treated separately, and they are generally so treated; but each head of proof derives strength from being taken in connection with the others.

But I have already impressed upon you that I am not so much directly proving anything in regard to God's revelation as enabling you to prepare yourselves to see it, wherever it is. Having admitted that Faith is an act of the intelligence, in the sense in which I have explained, I come now to draw attention to the important fact that it is *an act of the will also*. It is not meant that it is an act of the will in the same sense as it is

an act of the intelligence ; but still it is an act of the will. For it is with the mind as with the bodily senses. The will can control the eye and the hand. The will can bid the eye be shut to what is present, or turned to what before was out of sight. And the will can blind our mental view and turn aside our intellectual look quite as easily and with far greater subtlety. It is a common saying that no one can be convinced against his will. Every one knows that the views which a man takes up, not merely in trivial matters, but in things of the greatest importance, largely depend on a thousand things besides mere evidence. A man's bringing up, his habits of life, his friends, his pride, his passion—do not all these act upon his convictions and generally mould them after their own shape? There are some self-evident truths, no doubt, to which it is impossible to blind ourselves, however much we may try. But as soon as the number of these truths is exhausted, there begins the region where will and wilfulness can shut our eyes and turn us about. Deductions and consequences which follow from the plainest and most undoubted truths—even these can be evaded. And at every step from overwhelming evi-

dence towards opinion, probability, and conjecture, the will and its prejudices are more and more absolute, and interfere more and more effectively. The ignorant, the ill-educated, and the average-minded—in fact, the bulk of humanity—are exposed to the danger of allowing their reason to be blindfolded by the influence of their wants, inclinations, and passions. And even the most intellectual and the most cultivated are sure to have their convictions tinged with a large infusion of their likings.

Now a man's impulses and likings may arise either from his human nature itself, or from external influences brought to bear upon him. He may want or refuse to do a thing merely because his innate passion prompts him, or because he has been wrought upon till he has acquired a second nature. It is of this second nature of man—or, in other words, of prejudice—as an obstacle to revelation that I wish to speak in this discourse; leaving the consideration of the deeper subject of man's own original nature for the next.

In the thirteenth chapter of the Acts is related the history of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch in Pisidia. On

the Sabbath-day, in the synagogue, after the reading of the law and the Prophets, Paul, rising up and hushing the wondering congregation with a gesture of his hand, preached to them Jesus Christ. Many conversions were made, and the week passed. Then on the next Sabbath a very large audience—‘the whole city almost’—flocked to the synagogue, and Paul preached again. ‘And the Jews,’ continues the inspired narrative, ‘were filled with envy, and contradicted those things which were said by Paul, blaspheming.’¹ And thereupon Paul and Barnabas told them, in the plainest and boldest way, that since they *rejected* the Word of God, it must be to the Gentiles they would speak for the future. We have here an example of prejudice. It is prejudice which is heightened by envy and evil passions; but there is no reason to suppose that the Jews did really admit in their hearts the truth which they rejected in their words of contradiction and blasphemy. How far they sinned, it is impossible to say. Prejudice against religious truth may be a deadly sin, or it may be an excusable ignorance. St. Peter seems

¹ Acts xiii. 45.

to admit some excuse even for the crucifiers of our Saviour; they did it through ignorance, he says, as also their rulers.² And St. Paul's vehemence of antagonism and prejudice against his Lord and Saviour was, to some extent, mistaken zeal for God's honor. 'I, indeed,' he told Agrippa and Bernice, and the splendid audience which had assembled to hear him in the palace of Festus at Cæsarea—'I, indeed, did formerly *think that I ought to do* many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.'³ His eyes were blinded, until that flash from the heavens near the gate of Damascus, striking him with darkness of sense, made him see the light of the Spirit. Prejudice may be deadly sin, or it may be lamentable misfortune. Perhaps we may be allowed to say that, unless there is sin in the way, prejudice will disappear sooner or later. But, in addressing ourselves to the task of removing it, we should imitate the spirit of St. Peter, and refrain from judging the hearts of those we would convert.

The work of conversion is, on man's part, chiefly the work of removing prejudice. When the revelation of God first comes to a

² Acts iii. 17.

³ Acts xxvi. 9.

man's door, it must of necessity be met by a disposition to reject it. When the Jews had Christ crucified preached to them, all their tradition, expectation, and habit of thought rose up to reject the novelty. When the pagan Romans first heard from Peter the name of the One God and of His Son, it was as if an insane man had tried to turn aside by a word the waters of the Roman Tiber. The stream of settled thought, established custom, and proud history was, to all human appearance, too strong to let the new dogma live for a generation. And the Apostles encountered the strength of this torrent in every individual soul they came across. Even those nations which were barbarous when the truth came to them were prepos-
sessed against the truth; like the trees on the bleak Eastern shores, the minds of the peoples were bent as the bitter winds of many a winter had bent them. And what is true of paganism is true of heresy. Born, nurtured, grown to man's estate in an atmosphere of error—clinging to error all the more firmly because it has mixed up with it some elements of the truth—the population of a country which has grown old in heresy is steeped to the very bone in prejudice. Just

the same ignorance and repugnance of thought exists in our days in regard to such truths as the Real Presence in the Eucharist and the Infallibility of the Pope, as existed in the days of Tacitus against the unity of God and the Incarnation of God the Son.

In order to understand better what prejudice is, let us look at the sources whence it springs. Prejudice, then, is a preoccupation or prepossession of mind and feeling against truth. It is a state or disposition which was not born with us or innate in us, but which has been brought about by external causes.

And the first cause or source of prejudice is education. By education I do not, of course, mean mere book-learning, mere reading, writing, and casting accounts; I mean all those influences which from birth to firm manhood go to mould and form the mind and the heart. I may remark, in passing, that the facts described and summarized in the word 'education' make Protestantism, as a theory, impossible. The essence of Protestantism, as an Anglican Bishop said lately, is that 'each man forms conclusions for himself' in matters of religion. But, on the contrary, the fact is, and must be, that the mass of men must simply accept the conclusions in

which they are brought up. I say it must be so. To form conclusions for themselves, they would have to turn readers, scholars, thinkers, linguists, and philosophers. And the mass of men will never be anything of the kind. The educated man may, perhaps, reject a truth here and there, or adopt an opinion, or come to a conclusion which he fondly thinks he has made out for himself. But even if that be true, his general religious practice will remain the same—will remain what he was brought up in. This thought shows the power of early bringing up; and it leads me to say that if the Catholic religion, for instance, be the true religion, the prejudice against it which exists in men's minds in a country like this is quite sufficient to account for its being hated and avoided. Prejudice is a state of prepossession. To the prejudiced mind truth comes as our Lord came on the night of His birth, and knocks at the doors of houses in which there is no room; they are occupied; truth must stop outside. The ordinary Englishman has taken in, since the first dawn of his reason, thousands of impressions about the Catholic Church, which he has accepted, for the most part, without an attempt to

verify them. His mother and his nurse have shaped his imagination as the potter shapes clay ; and the Catholic Church, to that child, is moulded by the phrases, the epithets, the casual words, or the studied depreciation of those who carried him in their arms and held his hand in the days of his infancy. The light which has shone upon him has come in through the windows of his father's house, and his sensitive fancy is colored by its color. What is begun at home is continued at school. As he grows up, all the chambers of his brain and the avenues of his thought are gradually filled with the ' idols ' which he picks up as he walks in his gradually-enlarging world. His masters, his books, his schoolfellows, his clergymen, all contribute to the furnishing of the empty and receptive intelligence. The standards by which he measures and judges, the pictures which stir his love, his sorrow, or his hatred, the mottoes and master-thoughts which lead him and guide him, are gathered one by one ; and one by one, as years go on, they become more and more a part of the very fibre of his being. The fathers and mothers, the schoolmasters, the clergymen, the books and newspapers of England—it is these which

make up English men and women. And you well know—I need not try to express—what the majority of these ‘educators’ and fashioners of youthful minds think and say about the Catholic Church. I am not saying whether it is right or wrong. But if it is wrong, it is the root and the reason of the strongest prejudice that could be. The Catholic Church exists in the thought and imagination of millions in this country as an unscriptural, corrupt, intolerant, superstitious, and absurd system of religious imposture. They think it to be so, hold it to be so, not because they have looked and seen for themselves, but because such is the picture or figment which long-continued impression of external influences, like some corrosive acid which marks ineffaceable lines on the steel, has written upon their brain. The majority hold it, alas, to their death—unreasoning, contented, glorying in the opinions which they have done little more to acquire for themselves than they have done to merit the color of their hair. There is a comparative minority who read, inquire, reason, and think out proofs with greater or less thoroughness. But education has given its bias to them and to their thought not a whit less

decidedly than to the unthinking multitude. When they read, they read the books which take their own side. If they read an impartial book, they see one half of every sentence, and do not see the other. They are prepared to find one set of arguments good and irrefragable, and the other worthless and bad. In all their reading, writing, and reasoning, they start with the fixed assumption, that the Catholic Church is false and in the wrong. They do not even allow themselves to suppose, as a serious possibility, that she may be right and true. They see their side of the shield; they do not dream that the other can be any other color. They delude themselves with the notion that they are above prejudice, and that they look outside of their minds for real facts; but all the time the 'idols' of education, of social impression, of general atmosphere, are what they really see. Facts assume the colors of their fancy; arguments make no impression, except so far as they lie along the straight and narrow vista they are accustomed to see before them. The Pope, to the educated or controversial Protestant, is a figure stuffed out with rags and straw, made to be the reason of a bonfire. The tradition of three hun-

dred years has shaped him ; and from time to time the portentous shape is solemnly carried out, and every passage of Scripture which is capable of being used in that sophistical way which logicians call inference of the universal from the particular, or *vice versa*, and every doubtful compliment in the Fathers, and all the ' facts ' which can be painfully raked from the gutters of history—most of them utterly irrelevant as arguments, even if true—all these stones and injuries are thrown in his scarecrow face ; and then he is solemnly burnt, while mobs applaud. The Infallibility of the Church is an imbecile fiction of the nursery, which the Protestant polemic, with contemptuous smiling, traces up the stream of fable till it disappears like some meteor of the swamp. He knows, before he starts, that it will disappear. The Real Presence—a most awful question of fact, if ever there was one—is an imposition, without a shadow of foundation or authority. The Protestant disputant knows it to be so. Starting with this certainty, he takes up his Bible, and the literal becomes metaphorical, and metaphor changes into naked fact. He turns over the leaves of his Church history ; and wherever the great fact comes up, he protests it is

something else ; and wherever it is absent, he cries out, ' Behold, it is denied ! ' Possibilities in material substance and in sensation which he would admit at once if some experimental physical philosopher propounded them in a letter to the newspapers, he scouts as incredible contradictions, because they are required by the Church's belief in the Blessed Sacrament. And so prejudice walks through the moral and the material world, like some misshapen fabled monster with fixed eye, which can see no color but the color it was born to see—which cannot look to the right or to the left, but only straight before it—for whom the field of existence and of possibility is limited to the narrow lines it moves along ; whilst the infinite forests around are full of life and wonder—whilst the untravelled ocean sounds unheeded along the shore, and the spaces of the ether overhead are peopled with worlds unthought of.

The prejudice which springs from education and bringing up is the most absolute and invincible of all forms of prejudice, because it is a prejudice which is part of the mind's own growth. To remove it is not merely to remove a veil or pull down a wall of partition, but to burn out of the heart the marks which

have grown into its fibre. If the prejudice against the Catholic Church which arises from education be a prejudice (as Catholics know it is), one thing is certain: the Catholic doctrine has enormous difficulties to contend with. It is a difficult thing to alter the views and general tone of thought even in the plastic mind of a young boy or girl; but when the mind, like the bones, has lost its pliability and grown hard; when the thought, never very active, has settled down into stagnation; when the hopes and illusions of youth have given way to the unemotional plodding, the routine mill-work which makes up the lives of ordinary Englishmen, then what lightning of eloquence or torrent of reasoning can efface the old false ideas? What beam of sunlight can pierce into the darkness amid the cobwebs where the old 'idols' stand, and make room among them for the truth? Even when the truth has made its way in, and the poor prejudiced mind begins to see it, the wrench, the novelty, the pain of letting go the old ideas, is a martyrdom which Catholic priests often have to witness and compassionate from their hearts. 'I am too old to change.' There is no cry so pathetic as this. It is the cry of the sailor who has sailed his long voy-

age with prosperous gales and carrying current, until his hand has grown feeble with age, his rudder stiff, his ropes rotted, and who just at sunset is horrorstruck to see that he has missed his harbor, and is running straight upon the whitening surf. 'It is too late to change!' And yet he must turn or perish.

Every allowance must be made for prejudice of education. God only knows how far each soul is answerable for its own share; but we know that the deepest damnation will be for those who first established that system of false teaching which has moulded the minds of the generations in this country for the last 300 years. Individual sins, private unbelief and wickedness are bad enough; but the teacher, the king, the minister of state, who sets up error and leaves it as an inheritance for the unhappy generations to come, what shall he deserve? He counterfeits God's own work. When God sows the good grain of His word, he sows the cockle of false teaching. They must both grow up together; the Master will not separate them till the harvest; but the sower is His enemy.

I have dwelt upon the prejudice of education because other sources of prejudice are

trivial in their effects compared with this. But it will be well to notice briefly one or two of them.

The second source of prejudice, then, is what we may call the world. The world means men and women—their aims, sayings, doings, and example, as far as they affect ourselves. When worldly advantages are on the side of an opinion, the mind is singularly open to see its truth. And, conversely, when to embrace a view would be to go against ‘the world,’ that view is difficult to take in. What I have called ‘the world’ raises prejudice against the Catholic Church by predisposing a man to keep out of the Church whatever his reason tells him. It acts in various ways. It may be, in the more respectable circles, that a man would be cut by his acquaintance if he became a Catholic. Instances of this happen every week. It is singular that good, worthy, and well-meaning people should have such a morbid horror of Catholicism. It is not unfrequently the case that a man’s friends would think less of it if he became a Turk than if he became a Catholic. And the feeling that he will have to undergo this is enough to prejudice any man. It is far worse when the embracing

Catholicism involves the breaking asunder of the ties of family. There are numbers who, irrespectively of truth or falsehood, are shocked and agonized at the hold which Catholicism is getting over them, or perhaps over some near relation, merely from the anticipation of the family troubles it will occasion—the reproaches of the father, the tears of the mother, the separation, the novelty, or the tacit reproach. ‘What would my family say if I became a Catholic?’ How many are held in bondage by this thought! They do not remember that they belong to God first—to God only. The men and women about them, even the nearest and dearest, have no claim upon them which can stand between themselves and their God. But the feeling is more than enough to create a prejudice. And the world has hundreds of ways of holding back the inquirer from the Catholic Church. It points out that the newspapers sneer at Catholicism; that the Pope is the object of unceasing ridicule; that Catholics, in this country, are mostly poor, and, in fact, Irish; that Catholics are priest-ridden, and must give up liberty and manliness of thought; and, most awful woe of all, that the ‘public opinion’ of the country condemns

Catholicism. And there are thousands who are predisposed against the Catholic religion by such feelings as these. It is only too natural that it should be so. When a man has formed himself a place in the world, made himself a circle of friends, and is living more or less according to the tone of thought and opinion which is the tone of the majority of his nation, his county, his town, or his village, it is very natural that he should be indisposed to change. New truth, if it be truth, is an unwelcome apparition when it draws the curtains of his couch and bids him get up and suffer uncertainty and discomfort for its sake.

A third source of prejudice is what we may call, in old-fashioned phrase, the flesh. It is a man's lower and baser self. It is the 'law of sin in the members,' that wars against the spirit. Ease, prosperity, sensuality, absence of trouble and anxiety—these are what a man's lower nature wants and seeks. Are there not many who could easily see the truth of Catholicism were it not that to become a Catholic they must suffer in their worldly prospects, and lose money and money's worth? People have a vague idea (even those who are otherwise ignorant) that the Catholic Church is a vigilant mistress. To

become a Catholic it is not enough to appear before a class-meeting or a congregation and pour out a few unctuous phrases. There is confession; there is the searching examination and the painful avowal. Then there is the Eucharist, with the Real Presence, and the awful responsibilities which follow from the existence of such an awful fact. The Catholic Church exacts a real, vital, detailed religious life. Habits of cherished sin must be given up. Careful self-examination must 'sweep' the spirit. Definite dogma and practice must be willingly taken up and loved. All this predisposes the flesh to dislike Catholicism, and to keep out of it. When money, comfort, and sensuality combine as advocates in a cause, the opposite side has little chance. They are all against the Catholic Church; and may we not be sure that the prejudice they create is the reason why many young men are afraid to admit the possibility that Catholicism is right? It is not that men consciously avow to themselves that it is their baser propensities which hinder them from being Catholics. It is that their lower self raises a mist which prevents them from seeing what Catholicism is. It makes them impatient of hearing about it.

It gives them a personal interest in not knowing it to be true. They are like men who hurry out of the house, or turn quickly back on the road, to escape an unwelcome messenger.

There is one other source of prejudice. If there are such beings as evil spirits, with power on earth, and if the Catholic religion is the true religion, it is certain that these spirits will not be passive in its regard. When John the Evangelist heard the voice in Patmos which told him what he was to say to the Seven Churches, He who bade him write spoke of the 'synagogue of Satan,' and the 'seat of Satan,' the place 'where Satan dwelleth.'⁴ It was the Evil Spirit himself with whom Jesus had to contend. It was the Evil Spirit who inspired false teachers, and who stirred up persecution. 'Behold the Devil will cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried.'⁵ And there is no doubt the Devil is as busy now as then. He has power over men who give themselves up to infidelity. He possesses them. He does not make them rave and foam like the possessed ones in olden times; but he exercises a subtle influence on nerve, brain, and

⁴ Apoc. ii. 9, 13.

⁵ Ib. ii. 10.

muscle, which makes them act, speak, and write against the Church of God with a sort of fevered and frenzied energy which they never show against any human institution. They hatch deliberate and gigantic lies. They wield the mighty powers of modern science for purposes of elaborate and systematic misrepresentation. They exercise a pressure on public thought as persistent as the pressure of the air round about men's bodies. They possess the ears of princes and powerful ministers. They move armies; and they make nations alter their laws to oppress the Church of God. Such instruments of Satan exist. And the prejudice which they create in the world—or, rather, which he creates by and through them—is the prejudice which at this moment hangs like a foul exhalation over the length and breadth of European opinion. The young, the unthinking, the multitudes who have no views except such as remain in their minds from the reading of their newspapers, are prejudiced against a system which is 'everywhere contradicted.'*

Let me repeat that I am not speaking of those who really think the Catholic Church is right, and yet, from some base motive,

- * Acts xxviii. 22.

refuse to submit to it. I am speaking of those who *do not see* that the Catholic religion is true; who are prevented by their prejudices from looking at or judging fairly the arguments or the position of the Catholic Church.

An inquirer, then, might fairly ask, How am I to treat my prejudices; and, in the first place, how am I to know they *are* prejudices? Is it not simply begging the question to say that I am prejudiced, and the Catholic believer not prejudiced, but only steadfast?

This is an important question. And I answer it by observing, in the first place, that, on the Catholic theory, a true believer ought to have strong convictions (or prejudices, as opponents will call them). The Catholic believes in the Church as a living voice; a voice which instructs him in his infancy, impresses him in his childhood, confirms and strengthens him in his mature age. But a man who is not a Catholic has no theory of this kind. He recognises no teacher with a right to shape and educate his mind. From the use of reason in childhood to the loss of his faculties in old age, every voice which speaks to him of religion, and every influence which tries to impress religious views upon him, is a human fallible voice, which may be mistaken, and

which, in many instances, *must* be mistaken, because contradictions cannot both be true. It is of no use to say he has the Bible. The Bible is what the Bible means; and, to the non-Catholic, what the Bible means is only what men make it out to mean. And therefore my first point is this, that all non-Catholics should be on the look-out, so to speak, for the existence of prejudice in their own minds. They may just as easily be prejudiced as not.

But I might admit that an honest unquestioning bias is no harm at all; and that the man who has such a bias will not be accountable before God. And I am even willing to admit that there are many of our countrymen who are at present in this state of what we call 'invincible ignorance.' But, on the other hand, how many there are whose convictions—not to call them by the harsh name of prejudices—are tottering, shaking, or just in the smallest degree tainted with bad faith? There are numbers of non-Catholics who know perfectly well they have been utterly mistaken on one or two plain matters of fact in connection with Catholic doctrine. Perhaps they have found out that Catholics do not pay divine honors to the Blessed Virgin Mary; or

that a priest cannot sell a man permission to commit sin ; or, to descend to smaller prejudices, that the priests do not *always* speak to the people in Latin. To these I would say emphatically, You have been grossly mistaken in one point ; look a little more carefully and you will discover that you have still a good deal more to unlearn. It is a duty to examine now. The pagans in the early centuries believed that the Christians ate the flesh of children, worshipped an ass, and committed gross immorality in their religious meetings. The true religion has always been misunderstood and slandered, like its Lord before it. And remember that in England especially, if the Catholic Church is the true Church, the only wonder is how a Protestant can even so far get over the prejudice of his bringing-up as to know her in any degree as she is. If, then, you have the least reason for doubting, inquire. If the house your fathers and teachers have built for you seems to be sinking a little, or letting in the rain by the roof, or the daylight by the solid walls, get outside of it and look about you. If the thing you took for a ghost, and were running away from, shows a substantial foot under its white sheet, go up to it, pull off

the sheet and break the turnip-head into pieces, and you will probably find that it is flesh and blood. If the preachers and teachers who have had the handling of you have committed themselves undoubtedly on this point or on that, challenge them thoroughly and see whether you have not been living in the dark.

And the wisdom of this way of acting is shown all the more strongly when you consider that you know almost nothing of the Catholic Church herself. You have kept away from her ministers, avoided her books, scouted her professing members; and you know that, if the Catholic Church be not true, it is very certain she might be so and you not be at all aware of it. You cannot in fairness avoid making inquiry.

And there is a special reason why every one is bound to notice and inquire into Catholicism. The reason is founded upon broad facts, undeniable and undenied. The argument is briefly this: that certain facts being admitted by all parties, the Catholic Church is the best working hypothesis for harmonizing and making men act up to those facts. We may illustrate the argument by what must have happened many times in the

world's history. When the unity, love, and justice of God, and the fact of creation, were first preached to a pagan people, I can suppose the preacher arguing this: You admit there is a divine power; now if you will attend to me for a short space, I can easily show that to believe that divine power to be One, to be Good, to be Just, and to be the Creator of all things, is far the best, not to say the only, view which a reasonable man can take. Or, again, suppose there were a nation who believed in the one God, but not in revelation; then the missionary might say: You believe in a God of love and power, who made you; and you see in yourselves the existence of moral evil and powerlessness to good, and the inevitable tendency of your nature to forget and corrupt the grand truth you profess. Now I preach to you that God *has spoken*; it is a reasonable and consistent theory at the very least; it explains the how and the wherefore of many things, and the way out of many difficulties; therefore you are bound to inquire into it. This is the least you can do.

Now I come to Catholicism. If there are any broad facts upon the face of the New Testament, there are three: first, the exist-

ence of some kind of teaching authority instituted by Christ ; secondly, some kind of a ministry ; and thirdly, some kind of Eucharistic presence of our Lord. I suppose every attempt at a church or a schism which has ever been made has embodied these three points, in some shape or other. I suppose there is not a believer in the New Testament who does not admit them in some sense. What I infer, then, is this :

It is certain that the Catholic Church has adopted and works most thoroughly each of these central thoughts. She holds that there is a living unerring voice of teaching which speaks to all ages ; she holds a ministry which does sacramental actions ; and she holds the real presence of her Saviour in the Eucharist. And therefore it is that I say she must be noticed and inquired into. You cannot dismiss her with contempt until you have patiently and painfully proved her to be an imposition. And when you have proved her to be an imposition, you will be like the man who cuts down the solitary tree in the tropical desert and awaits the coming up of the next day's sun.

What I have said hitherto applies to all non-Catholics, and is grounded simply upon the

fact of their having been brought up so. But there are particular reasons why very many should be on the watch for prejudice. There are some who doubt, and whose doubts trouble them, rising like importunate spectres which will not rest ; and they dread to listen to their doubts, because they are afraid of what would happen if they did. They are afraid of coming to know the truth. They are afraid that a system which they have so many personal grounds for disliking will turn out to be the revelation of God. They are those who have, perhaps, committed themselves to a loud and public denial of the Catholic Church. They are those at whose recantation the world will stand and wonder. To turn would be, in their case, to be laughed at, to be avoided, to estrange dear friends, to abandon pleasant positions. To become a Catholic would, perhaps, be to lose their daily bread. And therefore they *must* be unconvinced. They think, speak, and act against the Church with a bitterness which is hard to bear sometimes, but which we can excuse, because we know that it comes from a troubled breast. ‘Their madness is according to the likeness of a serpent ; like the deaf asp that stoppeth her ears : which will

not hear the voice of the charmers.' They are acting against light; they are despising, not man, but the Voice of the Holy Ghost.

A man who would act in good faith and be honest with his God in the momentous question of revelation, must be sure that he is doing all that lies in him. He must abandon all narrow and insular notions of religion. The Church of God is over all the world, and before all nationality. It is a kingdom not of this world, but with a right to reign all the world over. He must keep down or put away that personal feeling of dislike to certain nations, classes, or individuals which tends to make him dislike Catholicism itself. The feeling that Catholicism is the religion of the poor and despised classes of the community, and of the weak, the ignoble, and unconsidered nations of the world, though it rests on a very one-sided induction, is a powerful prepossession against the Catholic Church. It has always been the same. You see it in Saint Paul. You see it in the book that the Neo-Platonist Celsus wrote in the second century to keep cultivated Greeks and Romans from turning Christians. Moreover, the man who would be sure that he is without

¹ Ps. lvii. 5, 6.

prejudice must see that he is not leading a worldly and sensual life. Personal sin darkens the heart. Habits of sin stifle the impulses of grace. If a man cannot assure himself, in all humility, that he is in earnest about loving God above all things, he cannot be safe from prejudice against God's light. If he is given to sensuality, or if he is conscious of a keen and clinging enjoyment of an easy and pleasant life, he is very open to prejudice. If he grounds his objections to Catholicism on liberty, on independence of thought, on the right to be one's own master, then he is almost certain to be wrapped up in prejudice; for, as the world understands these things, they are just what the teaching of Gospel truth has been given to destroy. And, finally, the heart that would be without prejudice must pray. No soul that prays as Jesus would have us pray can be lost. But argument and learning, natural honesty and kindliness, all the natural virtues of the friend and the citizen, though they are very good, will not avail to bring a man to the light unless he prays. Yes; after all, God's grace being understood, a man has his heart in his own hands. The heavy fogs and mists which, in the intervals of wintry gales and

rains, roll over these Northern seas from which our islands rise, are full of danger; and at their coming on men must only be passive and wait till the laws of nature are fulfilled and the skies are clear again. And the thick mist of prejudice is a fearful danger to the soul of man. Disaster, wreck, and ruin, worse than any the senses can take note of, are in the path of the man who walks in guilty prejudice. But he can disperse the darkness and be free. He can raise his heart to God. He can rise above the earth and its exhalations. He can be sincere; he can resolve that he will do God's will, whatever it may be; and he can pray without ceasing. And the sun will shine out when the Lord so wills.

IV.

WILFULNESS AS AN OBSTACLE TO FAITH.

But now you rejoice in your arrogancies. All such rejoicing is wicked. ST. JAMES iv. 16.

PREJUDICE comes to a man from without. It is the effect of early training, of lifelong teaching, of reading, and of living in the world. It is the result of almost imperceptible impressions, and yet its force, as an obstacle, is such as in many cases to defy human efforts to remove it. It is like the snow which begins to fall, as the darkness sets in, on roof and road, in little flakes that come down silently all the night; and in the morning the branches bend, and the doors are blocked, and the traffic on road and rail is brought to a standstill. We have considered prejudice. To-day we must go farther—deeper down into the heart. The difficulty which man finds in Faith is not sufficiently explained by any explanation which deals merely with external causes. It is the

heart itself, in its very constitution, as man now is born, which is the root of all that holding back, that haughtiness or pride, which prevents the greater part of those who do not believe from believing.

Whatever goodness there is in the human heart—and on that head it is not necessary to speak just now—it is certain, in the first place, that there is also a formidable amount of evil; and, in the second, that the evil is stronger, naturally, than the good. History, that is fact, proves both these points. We can judge of man's heart from the results of men's lives; and the voice of cultivated antiquity joins with that of modern Christianity, and even with the instincts of heathenism and savage barbarism, in proclaiming that men's lives have always been, and are, in a very great measure evil. It has always been that evil is easier, more natural, more spontaneous, and that good has had to be fought for with sacrifice and abnegation; and evil has mostly prevailed. And whence does this evil spring? Was the heart made and constituted with corrupt and depraved inclinations by its Creator?

The Catholic tradition and teaching is, that man was originally constituted in rectitude

and supernatural grace. The knowledge, love, and service of God was his object in this world; the happiness of the blissful vision was his destined end in the world to come. And man's heart was 'right;' that is to say, intelligence, will, and sensibility were in harmony one with another, and wrought together to the attainment of the grand and ineffable last end. But in his happy and sublime estate man's heart was still in his own hand. His will was still free to choose. He was free to turn from his Creator, and turn his back upon his grand destiny. He could not be otherwise, consistently with God's designs and his own nature. And consider what this freedom of man's heart means. It means that man's heart has the marvellous power of seeing good in anything which exists, and of fixing itself upon that element or vein of good, to the exclusion of other things that are really better, and to the exclusion also of the Creator and His blissful vision. It is true that these are only other names for pure, unmixed, and necessary good; but still, as long as the heart of man was to live in the world, even the world of Paradise, it was not fully to appreciate this; and therefore, though it

knew more than enough, and was drawn by a thousand chains to choose and cling to what it knew so clearly, it had the power of shutting its eyes and breaking every bond asunder. There was something very near it—something lying close to itself, nearer than the knowledge which it had of the supreme objective good. The consciousness of a rational creature necessarily begets that *self* which lies at the bottom of all the movement of the human heart. Self must be the motive-spring of choice. Self may choose to annihilate self on earth; and in the bliss of eternity self will be crowned, completed, and ravished into ecstatic trance by the ineffable Vision which it *must* possess, or be in misery for ever. But self cannot die; and until it is bound and fettered in the sweet entrancement of bliss, self may reject anything, or take up anything in this world of passing shows, and with no other motive, on final analysis, than itself. This was the power which lay, not dead, but living; not even asleep, but slumbering, in the peace of Paradise, at the bottom of Adam's heart, as he walked in the primitive Eden, even in the presence of Jehova. The moment came when it woke up, and wrought the mischief.

that was in it to work. Adam's sin was disobedience, or pride. It was the assertion of that self which he had in him. He turned his back upon his Creator, and preferred a created good, mean and miserable though it was ; but it was really self that he set up in God's place when he said, 'I will not obey.' And the innate self or wilfulness of man never seemed to slumber again after Adam's disobedience. Or rather, it did learn to slumber, but not among the bowers of Eden. In Paradise the whole heart was sound, the whole intellect clear ; and true good had come so naturally to be loved and longed for that the heart was peaceful in the very strength of its propension. But after the fall, with the first parents and with us their offspring, good has become arduous, because true good is now more hard to see clearly, and because in the same proportion as true good recedes from view the perverse inward feeling which makes self all in all grows stronger ; and also because a hundred importunate sensualities clamor at the heart's portals, and implore it to riot in their company. Therefore good has become arduous ; in other words, self is prone to evil, that is, to rest in itself. And when it slumbers now, it is not, as I have said, in

the hallowed repose of peace, in righteous strength, but rather in the degradation of a drunken debauch, when it has sunk so low as not even to struggle against its pride and its passion.

No one can doubt that pride and passion are strong motive powers in the actions which spring from man's heart. That there is a higher element in the human heart is true; what it is we shall see hereafter. But none can dispute that St. Paul is right when he speaks so much of the lower nature which a man feels working within him, of the 'law of sin,' the 'law of concupiscence,' the 'old man,' the 'carnal man.' Man's will is still free; but it is more or less blinded, it suffers importunity, and it is more easily thrown on itself as an end and object. Passion or sensuality is the sensibility and activity of the lower nature, without the sanction of the rational will. Passion is the stirring of sensual love or hate, of liking or disliking, of want or repugnance, in the sensitive powers. As man comes into the world now, reason cannot utterly silence and quell passion. Reason can control, direct, weaken. Reason can act as a constitutional monarch acts—with ingenious policy and management en-

deavoring to stop the mouths of those who complain and calm the violence of those who rebel. But reason has no despotic power. Given the object, passion lights up, smokes, and flames. And the heat and the smoke of passion act upon the higher and nobler powers to stifle them. Calm thought cannot subsist with passion. The pure and serene regions of spiritual contemplation are inaccessible to the heart that is filled with passion. Sensuality is a hindrance to the realisation of that life which is above us and around us. Spiritual matters are, at the best, difficult of discernment. The sense, which primarily supplies us with materials for thought, too often prevents us from thinking them out. And when the sense is indulged and given in to, spiritual discernment dies. The heart is chained to the earth; the idea of a future life or of an immortal soul is so dim and so far off, that it has no effect on thought or conduct; things beautiful, true, and of good report are loathed; prayer is all but impossible. That is what is meant by a state of blindness, or hardness of heart. Hardness of heart results from giving the rein to passion. It is true that passion is born with a man; but it is born weak and

puny. It may be stifled, subdued, almost killed dead. If it is allowed to grow great, it becomes a tyrant, and gets hold of every avenue and spring of the heart. The drunkard with his drink, the sensualist with his eating and drinking, the sluggard with his sloth, the impure with his degrading sin: all these, when they sin, do not merely cast one more stone upon the heap that God is one day to count, but they tie one more weight about their own hearts that will one day sink them in the sea.

Belief in God's revelation has had a great obstacle in human passion. I have already slightly touched upon this. But is it not self-evident? God's revelation speaks of an all-holy God, a strict moral law, and a future retribution. Passion feels the present and lives in the sensible. And therefore it acts on the reason like one who holds the door fast and keeps the innocent prisoner from the air and the sunshine. Or it is like some rabble rout which kill the very messengers who were bringing hope and food to the starving town. Passion is self; but it is of self that Truth had said, 'He that loveth his life shall lose it.'

And the other side of self is pride or wil-

fulness. Pride is not one sin. It is the mother of sins. It is the accursed soil which grows a wilderness of sin. It is the fire in the earth's bowels which bursts out in various portents, but is always fire. At one time it shakes the solid earth with tremblings and earthquakes; at another it pours itself out in blazing lava-streams upon the farms and vineyards. Again, it thunders far over sea and land, and again it sends up to heaven the black smoke of its burning, now in a thin column, now in mighty masses which blot out all the sky. So it is with pride—which is another name for self. It looks at itself, and it is pride. It looks round about, and it is vanity, conceit, ostentation. It looks at its neighbors, and it is hypocrisy, or envy, or malice, or uncharitableness. It looks to its God, its Maker, and then it is indifference, or presumption, or blasphemy, or disobedience, or unbelief.

Unbelief! Yes; pride, or wilfulness, as I prefer to call it, is at the bottom of an enormous amount of the unbelief which exists in the world. Whatever may be said of passion—and passion is a terrible obstacle to the acceptance of revelation—it does not spread such a thick night over the spiritual

discernment as wilfulness: For Faith is a yoke, an obedience, a captivity. And wilfulness is a simple and complete natural aversion from the bearing of any yoke, from the yielding any obedience. Wilfulness is that in our nature which rises up against the being ordered or dictated to. Wilfulness refuses a master and a law; it would be its own master and a law to itself. A man tyrannised over by his passion is often a believer in his heart; and if passion dies out, or the terrors of death and judgment suggest themselves, he frequently shows that he believes, and uses his belief (with God's grace) to rise again to love and justification. But wilfulness is deeper in the fibre of the heart than passion. It is so far natural to man that it is born with him and grows with him; and though reason (with God's help) may keep it within bounds, it is never rooted out. A child is wilful, and its delicate nerves and tender muscles oftentimes throb and quiver with the current of *will* which runs through them, and comes out in temper, passion, spite, and disobedience. A young man's first impulse when he sets his foot in the real world is to do as he likes; and he too often takes care to do so, as far as is consis-

tent with his worldly prospects. The luxury of being one's own master is above all other luxuries—even above money and the comforts which money can bring. Wilfulness throws the mind into attitudes of criticism, contempt of established fashions, discussion of all that can be discussed. And if any mind is not clever enough for discussion, it has no difficulty in simple sturdy opposition. It is when the body is strongest and the spirit highest that wilfulness engages in deadly struggle with the maturing soul, and perhaps conquers; and where it conquers we have a man who is led by mere nature, and knows not God, or virtue, or the bliss to come. Human wilfulness is essential opposition to God, who points out to man the only way, and bids him walk therein. It repeats every day the cry of him who first said, 'I will not serve.' Its spirit is the spirit of the evil one, who would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven; he is beaten, he is without justification, yet for ever he mutters thus, and strains the chain that holds him. This natural and carnal wilfulness is the greatest obstacle to the acceptance of God's revelation, to Faith. Whether there be question of outwardly professing Catholics who are

cold in the Faith, or of the multitudes who give themselves some of the numberless names of heterodoxy, or of the millions who sit in the death-shadow of heathenism, the preaching of the Faith is to them as though their nature encountered a blow or a shock, and was hurt. It is a stumbling-block. It is foolishness. They have words to express what they feel. They talk of liberty, independence, free-thought; of slavery, of the yoke, of the fetter and the tyrant. And they are right. For belief is a submission, a yoke, an obedience, a slavery. It is a submission to the Creator. It is the yoke of Jesus Christ. It is the obedience of reason to revelation. It is the serving of God, and of the truth. It is true that this is a royal slavery, a light and proud yoke to bear. But the fact remains that it is a yoke. Let the heart turn itself as it will, God's revelation, wherever it exists in the world, must come to it as a law and a fetter. It is as if some wounded animal, terrified and struggling fiercely, were held by a merciful hand to be healed and saved.

And there is no doubt that the calmly-reasoning man will look upon this wilfulness of the human heart as a wound and a weak-

ness—not as health or strength. A force can only be judged by what it does. If it does what it is intended to do, its action is right and good ; if it misses its proper aim, it only adds to the confusion of the universe. The human spirit is a force : a power more mighty in its movement than the great planets, which, noiseless and unresisted, move through the spaces of the ether. Let the swiftly-whirling star keep to its true path—to its everlastingly - appointed sphere — and the fixed unchanging universal laws of things work harmoniously to hold it up and help it on. Collision, crash, and wreck lie outside its path. Let it swerve, and there is ruin. But let it be true to itself, and there is strength, swift progress, and perfection. The heart is made for a purpose, and its laws are broadly written on its very constitution. It must worship and love its Maker ; and the proof of this *must* is that it must, in the long-run, possess its Maker, or be in anguish evermore. Therefore pride or wilfulness is in itself as great a deordination as would be the mad career of some enfranchised planet. It is as great a danger as if some terrific material power, like water or fire, should burst its containing bounds. But it is more than this

with a rational soul ; it is a misery. It is a misery, because the misguided force is really under the control of the rational will, with God's grace, in the long-run. It is a wound, because it is as if the soul, which ought to fly upwards, and which has power within it to do so, had been stabbed, or crippled with a shot. And it is final ruin, because the crash must and will come some day.

There are some who think, and even say, that to resist is manliness. Pride or wilfulness is not manliness. No doubt it is natural to man, and part of his fibre. But if any one is prepared to call everything he finds within his breast by the approving name of manliness, his manliness is not the manliness which is worth considering. Man has a controlling power within him, which is reason ; and reason, though dragged along by wilfulness, can still direct and insist. And as reason is that by which a man is a man, and not a brute beast, reason is the only root of true manliness, and not the inordinate self-assertion of wilfulness. Wilfulness is merely the pirate who seizes the laden ship, and in drunken helplessness runs her on the rocks. Man is meant for God, and is never manly when he sacrifices himself to self.

And some put forward the great word, Freedom. They say it is a man's prerogative to be free. It is almost a social heresy in this country to say anything in disparagement of Liberty. Generations have clamored for Liberty, fought for her, written about her, sung about her, until we who live in this generation are like men who are in the front of an excited mob, and are forced to go forward with the crowd and shout with them, on penalty of being knocked down and trampled upon. Yet, after all, no reasonable man would say that freedom is a good thing, merely because it is freedom. The power to do as you choose is a power; and so is speech; so is a sword. As speech may be used to very bad purpose, and as a sword may serve the ends of a murderer, so freedom may be as easily used for wrong objects as for good ones. Freedom *to do right* is indeed a great and precious boon. External coercion and internal persuasion, when employed for evil purposes, are great evils and wrongs. And freedom from the fetters which bind the hands from doing good, or the heart from seeing right—this is truly a good thing, to be longed for and even fought for. But the mere liberty to do as you like is not a good thing, but

often an evil thing. License is not liberty. Now it is just license which the human heart, left to the promptings of mere nature, wants and works for. So that these two watch-words, manliness and liberty, so often in the mouths of men, are misleading and dangerous. Mere 'manliness' in the popular sense, is no more a virtue than a muscular strength is a virtue. A man is not good merely because he is strong or tall. He is not commendable merely because he has a strong propensity to please himself. Virtue—real, true, moral excellence—is a thing of the reason, of deliberate choice, of struggle. And therefore the mere lust of independence is not a virtue. To be manly in the true sense of the word you must not be an impulsive child or an ignorant and wrong headed savage, but a Christian man, guiding your troublesome nature by the help of reason, faith, and God's grace. For the higher and the nobler part of man can only be developed and grow in the light and the sunshine of revelation and of sacramental grace, and can only be thoroughly free to follow its preordained course when there is a pressure on that pride or wilfulness which would bind it to the chariot-wheels of self.

The weakness of the human heart, then, and its wounded state—in other words, its passion, but especially its pride or helplessness—are such that God's revelation is disagreeable to it. We may, therefore, expect that if God's revelation does exist in the world, it will encounter the opposition of human nature. And it is quite certain that, in the case of the Catholic Church, this opposition is a potent and undoubted fact. We have always had resistance and reproach; and they have come just from the quarters from which the history of Adam's disobedience would prepare us to expect them. First of all, in all ages and in all countries, the bulk of mankind have been, at the least, very indifferent to the voice of God's teaching and the precepts of His law. It was so in the days when the Catholic Church was the public Church of every state in Europe; it is so now in Catholic countries, as well as in the minority of the population which is Catholic in a country like this. There is always a tendency to shut the eyes to eternal truth, and to resent the yoke of teaching. But opposition with Catholics is mostly of a silent and practical kind; it seldom takes the form of explicit rebellion; and, by God's help, the

hearts of multitudes repent and they are saved. It is otherwise with non-believers. They, of course, make no scruple of saying out what they think; and we find that the hardest sayings come from those who may be presumed to be most smitten with the taint of the fall, and possessed by passion and pride. I do not allude merely to the fact that wherever the Catholic Church has been forcibly overthrown the blow has been given, as a rule, by a prince or potentate who was personally an evil liver, and generally for motives connected with his evil life. I do not care to dwell on the fact that no view of the Catholic Church can be so forbidding as that which is suggested to a man by his darling sins and evil habits. But the startling fact is that the people who possess a great deal of the mental motive power of the world—statesmen, politicians, and public journalists—have, as a general rule, hated us. Now we know that the general run of statesmen, for instance, are men who pursue objects which are not at all supernatural or elevated in the Gospel sense, but earthly, temporary, and material. They work hard to qualify themselves to lead their nation in its home and foreign policy, in its concerns of trade, in

its finance, in its matters of police. They have rivals to distance, powerful interests to conciliate, factions to reconcile. They have to practise simulation, affectation, hypocrisy, if nothing worse; and their object is the material prosperity of the State, if not chiefly their own ambition. To such the Gospel law is simply an impertinence. It would not work. It would interfere. Therefore they must have none of it. They must keep it out when it is not in, and banish and proscribe it when it is. This is the reason why so many statesmen have persecuted the Catholic Church. The Church professes to teach independently of them, by a sovereign right conferred by God. The rulers of states have different ends, different views, other codes of right and wrong; therefore they oppose the Church. And so far, at least, the Church bears no small resemblance to that teaching of Christ which St. Paul has called a captivity and an obedience. These men of the world do not care to persecute a Church which does not pretend to teach. And what is said of statesmen may be said of politicians generally and of journalists. Men who aspire to teach the world must either teach God's truth or their own private seemings. And men who teach

out of their own hearts, or out of an evil tradition of merely human ideas, the more they formulate and express their thoughts, the more they drift from truth. Their ruling idea is that they can teach what should be taught. And therefore, in their wilfulness, they must needs scorn the Church of God. We should expect it. The multitudes do not think much ; but the public writer must move on. He must form opinions and take sides. And in the enormous majority of cases the human heart, the taint of Adam, which he carries in him, will set him on the wrong side. And therefore the Catholic Church expects his opposition, and she has it. The statesman studies material and temporary interests, the journalist upholds free thought and free discussion ; and the Gospel of Christ comes in the way of both.

And I go farther. I venture to assert, not only that it is perfectly natural to expect that politicians and journalists will oppose the Catholic Church, if she be the true Church, but it is also to be expected that in a non-believing country, the greater the (so-called) civilisation, the keener will the opposition be. Civilisation means, with most men, material progress and independent thought, creature

comforts, physical science, and indifference about religion. Civilisation, without Faith, means simply greater enlightenment in getting the greatest amount of gratification before death comes to hinder us. It means greater consciousness, more proud knowledge of things comparatively little to the purpose. It means an elaborate indifference to the Kingdom of Heaven. It means a more systematic cultivation of passion and wilfulness. And therefore it means opposition to the revelation of Christ, which points to heaven, and exacts humble submission. And that is the reason why modern civilisation hates the Catholic Church. A civilisation which includes true Faith strengthens Faith and preserves it ; but it is a positive barrier to it when it does not exist. It is a dragon which might guard a golden fruit ; but if the garden be already plundered, its chief office is to keep away the anxious voyagers who come with seed to sow the desolate soil afresh.

I conclude that it is human passion, but especially human wilfulness, which makes some of the best-endowed minds of our day, and a great part of its civilisation, resist the Catholic Church. Perhaps they know not what they do. But it is their misery, if not

their fault. I might say that the most of those who clamor about free thought and independence have little claim to it. I have shown that not one man in a thousand really forms his religion for himself. In Protestantism there is plenty of despotism; not such as the Church exercises, with calm maturity, leaning on the wisdom of ages, but irresponsible, unreasonable, and almost savage. Friends avoid friends; parents disinherit children; men of what is called good position dare not attend a Catholic sermon, for fear of the social consequences. But this is a poor retort. I prefer to invite you to consider, once more, the Gospel characters of Faith and the characteristics of the human heart, and to pray that its weakness and wilfulness may have nothing to do with keeping the light from your eyes. Consider that Faith demands a sacrifice. Christ offers us peace—not the peace of sloth and indulgence, but the peace of calm and settled belief. Consider the Church as some guide or monitor, stern of aspect, perhaps, and uncompromising, who stands beside you on your journey whilst you deliberate which way you shall turn, and briefly points out the true and only path that leads you home. You, perhaps, if

you are not in reasonable mood, fly into passion with your truthful adviser, and, merely to show that you are free and independent, choose the way which leads to death. You think you prove your manliness when you allow your lower nature to play the tyrant over that reason which alone constitutes the true nobility of man!

I dwell upon the spirit of wilfulness, and its manifestations in the craving for independence and freedom, and the pretence of manliness, because I believe it is the very root of the world's opposition to the Spirit of Faith. It is the spirit which is spoiling the world just now, as it has spoiled many a region of the world before. Through it men are led into the worst of heresies and the worst of idolatries—the honor and the worship of themselves and their own thoughts. Through it there is coming to be no such thing as God or Jesus Christ, because mankind, instead of looking outside of themselves to be taught, look into their own uninstructed hearts, and set up for worship what they find there; and what they find is sometimes as unlike the living God as any idol of India or the Southern Seas. It is the spirit of wilfulness, refusing to be taught, which is confusing the

limits of right and wrong—which is making men deny virtues to be virtues and sins to be sins, because they are too independent to learn from others, or to follow any authority of times past or times present. It is wilfulness which is the reason of the most melancholy sight the modern world has to show—the huge and hideous waste of the good qualities of able and earnest men, who go wrong in all directions because they think it manly to believe as they choose. They are conscious they have neither time nor opportunities to search out what is right for themselves; they know they can only expect to make out a few of the easier problems of humanity; yet they think it better to be content with the few pools of water in the wilderness than to seek the stream. There is enough good-heartedness and earnestness round about us to move the world, if God so willed; but it is wasted, because each man is for himself. The crowds follow, indeed, authority, but not because it is authority. They accept what is current because it is current and familiar, and because they have no power to think anything out for themselves; but they have no true reverence, submission, or lowliness of mind. Their spirit is not the Spirit of Faith, but the spirit of

inert and passive acquiescence. When the landslip comes, they slide helplessly. And the higher minds, as I have said, are only isolated guessers at truth. They sail, each in his little boat, tossed hither and thither, touching at every port, wrecked on every shore. And the world of religious thought, in a country like this, is like the low flats where a great river has burst its banks, and the shallow waters lie far and wide, noisome, inefficient, a ripple here or an eddy there, but without advance or motion towards the sea. If men would, these waters might return into the river's bed, and the banks might be made high and strong, and the stream might flow calmly on, full and resistless, carrying joy and usefulness to men, and finding its home at last in the boundless ocean.

V.

FAITH THE GIFT OF JESUS CHRIST.

(Preached on Christmas-day.)

Lord, Thou wilt give us peace ; for Thou hast wrought
all our works for us. ISAIAS xxvi. 12.

THE Lord and Prince who was given to the world on the night of Christmas we love to call the Prince of Peace. It was the title by which He was hailed in the Psalms and the Prophecies. It is the name which best suits the proclamation which angelic heralds sang forth to the world when they filled the midnight with their melody : ' Glory to God ' and ' Peace to man ! ' His office was to be ; to spread His peaceful empire over all the world ; to give to men a true, firm, and lasting peace. And to symbolise this His purpose He willed to come down to the earth in the midst of the most profound peace. War had ceased in the world. The clash of arms had died down and died away. The Roman power peacefully grasped the conquered

world. From the shores of Britain to Tartary and to India the legions were peacefully encamped, watching from their lofty entrenched hills or from their walled cities the populations that no longer thought of resisting them. Judæa and the Holy Land were at peace. In the phrase of the old historian, 'the land rested.' Fighting had ceased. Roman soldiers garrisoned Sion; Roman tax-gatherers sat at the receipt of customs; Roman judges administered the laws. And He was born in quiet peaceful Bethlehem—Bethlehem, among whose cottages, hidden in their vineyards, cornfields, and olive-gardens, even the stir caused by the enrolment was nothing more than a village festival. The world at peace—the land at peace—the city at peace—the cave in the hill-side most peaceful of all; thus were things disposed when the wayfarers of Christmas-eve sought for a lodging. And in the words of Holy Scripture, 'When all things kept silence, when the night was in its middle course, Thy Almighty Word, O Lord, came down from the throne of His royalty.'¹

Thus we love to dwell upon the lessons of peace that Christmas brings. And yet is it

¹ Wisdom xviii. 14.

not a strange peace that Christ the Lord has brought upon the earth? Does not His own life, do not His own words, seem to contradict the angels and the prophets: 'I came not to bring peace, but the sword'? These are His words. And did he not come, as Isaias prophesied, to pull down, to build up, to root out, to destroy? Was He not, infant as He was, still the mighty God?

We cannot understand His peace unless we can understand His power. There is a peace which is death, or solitude, and there is a peace which means the quiet and noiseless working of mighty force; and the peace Christ came to bring was of the latter sort. He came into the world a power, a principle of life. He came to give men power to lead a very active and a very energetic life. He came with His hands full of the most powerful gifts. His object in coming was not to hush things into the silence of the tomb, but to set up a life and a power which, great as it was, should act silently and swiftly, as long as it acted under His own hand. But if it lost His own motion and direction, it was to recoil with hideous ruin.

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. These are the two stupendous forces that

lie within the small compass of that infant form.

Christ, our Lord and Saviour, is Master of two worlds ; and one of them the mass of mankind will hardly recognise. The world of the natural is the world of things as they are in their nature—matter, physical life, mind. The world of the supernatural is the world of things to which the gift of God has added a beauty or a power which their original make or composition does not demand, and could never rise to by itself. The existence of the world or realm of the supernatural follows from one fact—the fact that God has wished man to have as his last end no less a beatitude than the vision of Himself face to face, even ‘as He is.’² Human nature was to live for ever (so its Creator wished) in the fires of the Beatific Vision ; and therefore it was to be gifted with a gift which should enable it to merit that Vision, and to look upon it without being consumed. The gift is called Grace here below ; when the passage of death is passed, it is called Glory. But both before the judgment and after it, the gift is a real gift of the soul, not a mere extrinsic relation or denomination.

² 1 St. John iii. 2.

There are no legal fictions with Almighty God. If He calls a man holy, he is holy; if He looks upon him with favor, he is favored; if He holds him gracious or acceptable, he has grace. And it is the realm of grace, with its sources in God's good-will, its effects as a state or a power on the soul of man, its results on bliss everlasting, which is summed up in the word supernatural. Of this world Jesus Christ is Creator and King.

Hitherto, in the preceding discourses, we have looked at what might be called the earthly aspect of Faith. We have been considering Faith chiefly as a state or an effect of man's nature. We have received it with reference to the Gospel teachings, with reference to prejudice, and with reference to the wilfulness of the heart itself. Not unfrequently, it is true, our glance has been raised from the earth to the heavens. We have all along recognised that the source of Faith is higher than any earthly level; and now it is necessary to enter more minutely into this consideration. To say, and to try to impress on the heart of man, that Faith is a gift of God, is in many ways the most important part of the task of one who

seeks to prepare minds for Belief ; and therefore I have begun to-day by speaking of the power of the Prince of Peace. For Faith, though not absolutely the beginning of the exercise of His supernatural power in the heart, is the beginning or foundation of His permanent reign therein.

What has been said on the subject of Faith will probably have led many of you to lay it down as certain that to have Faith, or to hold it, is a very difficult thing. Although Belief is so natural to us that a great part of our rational life is made up of simply believing, yet to believe in the Gospel and to believe in the Church, we must, it would seem, both put strong pressure upon ourselves, and resist with great determination several adverse influences. And this is true. Faith is not easy to the unassisted human heart. If I were saying all that had to be said on the subject, I should add, that Faith without help from above is impossible. But there can be no doubt that it is difficult. To believe, the mind must have a power of keen sight and of far sight, in order to be able to see things distant and things unnoticed by the crowd ; a sight like that of the sailor, whose eye is trained to see the coming sail

when as yet it looks a mere speck on the line where land and sea meet. To believe, there must be a conscious inward exertion—a gathering up of will-power—a clinging fast with intellectual grasp. In other words, Belief or Faith (granting it to be a desirable thing) is a virtue; for the old and the true meaning of virtue is the activity of moral and spiritual power towards good. But virtue must be in a man before it can come out of him. If a man does an act of kindness, it is because he is kind; if he behaves justly, it is because he is just. It is the same as in physical matters: if a man deals a heavy blow, or runs swiftly, it is because he is muscular and healthy.

To believe, then, as God would have us believe, we must possess the virtue of Faith.

A man who hears this might, if he knew no better, cry out in despair, How can I get the virtue of Faith? But all of you who know the Catholic teaching are aware that God's providence has provided for us here, through the blood of Jesus Christ. To those who know where to look for the virtue of Faith there is no difficulty in finding it. The truth is, that God is ready to *give it to us*. When God gives a man a virtue, that virtue is said

to be *infused*. God ‘pours’ the grace of it into his soul. Such virtues begin to exist in the heart on a certain day and hour; the greatest of them without any merit, or procuring, or practising on the part of man. It is thus that we believe that there come into our hearts the three great theological and preëminently Christian virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. They are God’s work within us, not our acquisition. They are given directly by God’s hand. They are like the rain of heaven, falling on the hill-tops, and gathering into great pools in the hollow places, or rushing in white streams down the furrowed mountain-side. They are instantaneous in their coming, copious and mighty. Whilst the virtues of human nature itself, though they too may come or may be increased in the same way, are most often like the scanty supplies of water which toiling and panting men carry up to barren heights where the rain of heaven does not fall.

It is the presence of these ‘infused’ Christian virtues in the soul of man which constitutes his supernatural life. In the case of infants, they are infused by the Sacrament of Baptism. It is not meant that an unconscious child can believe, can hope, or can

love its Maker ; but it receives a real power in its soul—a power which will remain latent until its body and its brain mature, but a power which is quite as real as its reason or its immortal soul itself. To the conscious and mature mind of a grown-up man or woman, this life and these virtues come in various ways, and they have various states and vicissitudes. In such a one, the gift of Faith is preceded and heralded by other emotions of grace. Faith may be found without Love ; and Faith of this kind is dead Faith, from which no living work can proceed. But Love can never be without Faith. And, finally, even Faith itself may be deliberately sacrificed and lost. As to the moral virtues—the virtues of the dutiful child, the loyal subject, the kindly neighbor, the honest man—these are ‘ christianised,’ so to speak, by the light and warmth of the three virtues which are Christian by excellence. The moral virtues, without ‘ these three,’ are the virtues of a pagan—good qualities, and praiseworthy, but useless unto life everlasting. And they are not only christianised by their presence, but purified, widened, strengthened, made heroic. They are weapons or tools which would not avail

us to build mansions beyond the barriers of this earth ; but when the hand of the Spirit grasps them, they become transfigured with the strength of the Spirit.

And, to complete this brief account of the supernatural life, two other of its phenomena must be noticed. The first is, the continual stream of 'actual' grace which Almighty God, through the blood of Jesus, lovingly rains down upon every soul of man : good desires, fervent purposes, sorrow for sin, and every holy emotion. And the second is the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost. Though all grace is a gift, yet there are seven marked and peculiar graces which are especially called gifts. They are read in the prophet Isaias ; and they are Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Knowledge, Fortitude, Piety, and the Fear of the Lord. These are something more than the soul's life, even though that life be the life of grace. Have you ever seen some mighty beast crouch down in silence before the uplifted finger of a man ? Have you ever seen the eye of a child light up with intelligence and love at the word of injunction uttered by a wise and kind master ? Or have you ever meditated in silence on the scene which once took place on the

shores of Genesareth, when Peter and Andrew, James and John, left father and mother and all things at the call of a voice and the gesture of a hand? The Holy Spirit is our Master and our Teacher; and it has pleased Him to put certain gifts into our hearts, when He is there, by which we feel Him when He moves us to act—certain chords or springs which vibrate to His voice, and answer to his touch; so that we are docile to His inspirations, and easily follow whither He leads. These gifts are the completion of the supernatural life. It is these gifts, fully used, unimpeded by little sins (great sins, I need not say, banish them altogether), which carry on to perfection the growth of the holiness of those heroes of the supernatural life whom we call the Saints.

It is difficult to get a hearing when one preaches the fact of the supernatural life. Even of those who read the New Testament and accept it, many do not really admit such a realm or region as I have been describing. Possibilities such as these are, no doubt, very awful, and give human life a color and meaning which may easily startle any one who thinks seriously. But New-Testament phrases contain the whole truth on which we have

been insisting. What else can be meant by such expressions as 'putting on Jesus Christ,' 'putting on the new man,' 'being engrafted on Christ,' 'walking in grace,' and 'washing our robes in the blood of the Lamb'? The supernatural life has a principle of its own, an object of its own, acts of its own, processes of its own. You cannot see it or measure it, but there it is, under your eyes, in the men or women whom, perhaps, you sit beside or pass in the streets. Those who live the supernatural life seem outwardly not very different from other men; and they join in the world's business as other men do. But they have thoughts, powers, a food, a living principle, and an elaborate life, such as the world never guesses. Sometimes the supernatural shines out. It does so when the world sees men ready to die—dying perhaps—for faith and justice; when men sacrifice themselves for their brothers' souls; when they are united to God after a special manner; and whenever grand examples of Christian heroism are given to the wondering world. The supernatural, though a secret power and a hidden one, is the greatest power in the world. It is the power of the Cross; it is the power of the Spirit. Though

evil must ever be, and scandals come, no specific form of evil or scandal ever finally puts down the supernatural. Philosophers tell us that hidden fire moulds this globe of ours. There is a hidden fire at work among you, about you, under you, which is continually acting on the world. It works mostly in silence, carrying out its appointed ministry. But it bursts out in volcano eruptions sometimes; and the houses that kings have built, and the vineyards and the gardens which have grown green and have ripened on the earth above, are shaken, are ruined, and are swept away. How many times the mere force of hidden supernatural power—faith, love, prayer, penance—has changed the surface of the world!

And every soul of man is meant to live this supernatural life. Every soul which does not live this life is dead. But the souls which possess it, possess something which makes them eagles in flight, giants in strength. There was once that Samson was set upon by his own countrymen and carried off to be delivered up to the Philistines. They beset his home in the cave of the rock, and they seized him, and bound him with 'two new cords;' then they marched him

out to the Philistine host, which was encamped in the very land of Juda itself, in a spot afterwards famous to all time as the place of the Jawbone. The Philistines saw their enemy and their scourge dragged in bonds to be surrendered to their power, and the whole army was in joyful commotion, and rushed forward with shouts of triumph to take possession of him. But mark what ensued! 'The Spirit of the Lord came strongly upon him; and as the flax is wont to be consumed at the approach of fire, so the bands with which he was bound were broken and loosed. And finding a jawbone, even the jawbone of an ass which lay there, catching it up, he slew therewith a thousand men.'³ The phrase which is so familiar to Holy Scripture when describing the great actions of the ancient heroes—the Spirit of the Lord fell upon him—is the phrase which best of all expresses the state of the soul which is possessed of the supernatural life of God's grace. It is the giving of the Spirit, no longer as formerly, 'by measure,' to special individuals for special purposes, but in abundance. 'You are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,'⁴ says St. Paul.

³ Judges xv. 14.⁴ Eph. i. 13.

And according to St. Paul, we are to walk (that is, to live and act) in the Spirit; the Spirit dwelleth in us, is given to us, is spread abroad in our hearts, and gives us hope and strength. It is this Spirit of power, filling the heart as He formerly filled the Holy of Holies in the Temple; who snaps asunder the bonds of sin, and enables men and women with the poorest and meanest of natural capacities to put so many hosts of opposing difficulties to flight, and win their way to Jerusalem at last.

We are speaking about Faith, and we seem to have embarked on the wide subject of the whole supernatural life. And it is natural to have done so. The battle of the cause of God's revelation must be fought on the question of Faith; for Faith is the position, the narrow pass in the mountain chain, by which the soul must enter into the peaceful realm of habitual grace and charity and Christian virtues. The world is divided into two clearly-marked divisions by the line where Faith begins. On the one side are the unbelievers; that is to say, either the darkness of the heathen, to whom Christ's tidings have not been preached, or the indifference of the incredulous worldly who

live only for the time that passes away, or the opposition of the reasoning sceptics who do not see, or the hostility of the apostates who have seen and grown blind again. On the other side are those who believe; either those whose Belief is living by charity, and shows itself in good works, or whose Belief, though dead as far as merit or acceptableness is concerned, is yet a real quality or habit, wrapping the poor sinful soul about, keeping alive some dispositions to grace, some preparation for repentance, some inclination to virtue, some fond remembrance of past devotion; just as the soldier who has deserted his colors may still wear his uniform till it turns to rags, and still cherish, unconsciously perhaps, the erect bearing, the firm step, the trained skill which he learned under the banner of his duty.

The question of Faith, then, is in many respects the question of the hour. Give the preacher an audience who *believe*, and he can hope to startle them into fear, or to raise their hearts to the love of God. But to preach to a generation which does not believe is as if one spoke to those who had shut the door and left the speaker out in the cold. And therefore what has been said

about the supernatural life and infused virtue, since it applies in the closest way to Faith, is of extreme importance. There are some who find Faith difficult to attain, and yet who long for Faith; and there are others who are indifferent or hostile to Faith. The first should be encouraged to hope and trust, and to petition the Giver of all good gifts. The latter should bethink themselves that they are like men who walk the earth and yet argue about the ether of the planetary spaces; on our theory they cannot expect to arrive at true knowledge about matters of revelation. For we believe that Faith is an infused gift of God, and virtue of the Spirit.

Let it be observed, therefore, that Faith is a gift not merely in the sense that God has given us revelation. It is doubtless a great and stupendous gift that the Creator bestows upon the world when He speaks to it, and reveals truths which it would either have perverted or never known. But it is not in this sense that I am now calling Faith a gift. God has given us the 'objects' of our Belief; but He also gives us the 'faculty' of Belief itself. In describing this faculty, as in describing other moral and spiritual faculties, we are obliged to speak chiefly of its

objects; we best explain what it is by mentioning what it can do. But it is a distinct thing from any of its acts, and from all of them.

But in calling Faith a supernatural quality or faculty which God 'infuses,' we are not denying that it resides in or qualifies the natural human intelligence. It is our own mind and will which believe; and Belief is not an act which goes on outside of them or independently of them, 'as if some bright spirit from the heavens were to animate a human body. It is the 'heart' which believes unto justice, as it is the 'mouth' which confesses our belief unto salvation.' Faith is a supernatural gift, but it rests on nature and glorifies nature; just as the rainbow, whose arch is in the skies, seems to stand upon the wood, the hill, the meadow, which it transforms.

It is this transformation of human minds and hearts which shows how great a gift is the gift of supernatural Faith. In the first place, it is a gift which makes the heart look up directly to God, its maker and its last end. There is a sense in which God is the only object of Faith. The reason is that be-

^b Romans x. 10.

lief means an acceptance of God's revelation because it *is* God's revelation ; it means the clinging to dogma, to creed, or to formulary, because God has made it known. Nothing can come within the scope of Divine Faith which is not part of a revelation of God. Faith, therefore, is the faculty which takes note of the communications that have reached the earth from the awful silence of the heavens. God speaks to our hearts and beings in many ways, and we have many sensitive organs that tell us of His word and His will ; but when He deigned to speak in accents which human nature could not claim to hear, He also gave a new sense to take such accents in. He spoke in the tongue of the Kingdom of Heaven ; it was a strange tongue to the beings whom He had made of clay. Even the immortal spirit, made after His own likeness, had no key to it. But that immortal spirit could receive, if it could not demand. It could look up to the clouds where the fiery chariot was whirling out of sight, and long for the prophet's mantle. And the mantle fell the spirit received the gift of Faith, and new visions, fresh realms of truth, which prophets had not guessed at and ancient saints but dimly seen, were opened

to every 'little one' on whom the gift had come. It was a gift which created a new world. It discerned things essentially invisible to sense or mere mind. It peopled this world below with innumerable existences, hidden under the curtains and the mists of matter. It set up for all humanity the ladder of the patriarch—which rested on the barren earth and the stone that was his pillow, and at whose summit was the open heavens and God Himself, whilst radiance streamed down and angels flitted to and fro. It was the 'argument,' or solid conviction of 'things unseen;' the 'substance,' or firmly grasped reality, of what was 'hoped for.'⁶ By it, and by nothing else, was rendered possible the life, the way, the conduct, which lead to the Beatific Vision. It 'realised' God in this world, and that after the deeper and more awful fashion in which He is revealed by His own word.

If there is such a wonderful gift and endowment of the soul as Faith, it is no wonder that, in spite of wilfulness and in spite of prejudice, there is such a thing as ardent belief in God's revelation. I have said that Faith is a gift which is bestowed upon the

⁶ Heb. xi. 1.

heart in order to enable it, as by some new faculty, to live and move in an invisible and supernatural world—or, in other words, to realize God the Creator. The difficulties which prevent the heart from accepting or looking for this invisible supernatural world are chiefly, as I have also said, hesitation as to the proofs of revelation, prejudice or preoccupation, and wilfulness. Now, no religious system or theory could deal with these difficulties which did not, like the Catholic Church, start with the supposition that Providence has destined for man a special gift or endowment to help him over them. Take the first. Hesitation as to the proof of revelation arises either from inability to see the force of the proofs, or, more commonly, from inability to get rid of some staggering objection. The *proofs* of revelation are not as strong and overwhelming to us as the proofs of many far less important matters. They are sufficient to prove its existence; especially they are sufficient to prove the existence of a teaching Church. But since they lie in a sphere which the mind of the ordinary man and woman of the world's millions is not familiar with, and since they have to be held with an earnest grasp as motives and master-

thoughts, the human mind must be helped to take them in, and helped to hold them. There is many a truth which men do not accept merely because it is crushed out of sight by the rush of other truths; and there is many a conviction which lies asleep and is hardly a conviction. And revelation might be, and would be, no better than such a truth and such a conviction to the multitudes were it not for the special gift of Faith. The *objections* to revelation are none of them, perhaps, unanswerable; but if they were, it must be remembered that an unanswered difficulty (unless it be a proof positive of the opposite) may often confront us without making us waver in our belief. The answers to our difficulties may lie, like the explanations of wind and weather, in spheres we cannot investigate. We must often be content with seeing that undoubted facts do not contradict us, without always being able to harmonize every fact with our position and theory. And, remembering this, we can always see, when dealing with the difficulties of revelation, that there would arise a difficulty a hundred times more serious if revelation were itself a fiction. But it is a part of the weakness of the human mind to be unable to look

at an argument as a whole. A small particular difficulty is frequently quite sufficient to produce doubt or disbelief in matters where there should be unhesitating acceptance. And the gift of Faith is meant to remedy this weakness, as far as revelation is concerned. By it the mind receives a certain magnetic attraction to divine truth. By it the intelligence so concentrates its gaze upon God's Word that the difficulties on this side and on that are but slightly felt. By it, above all, the mental faculties of the humble Christian are raised to that grand generalization which in matters of science only the master-minds attain, that a vast, grand, and harmonious system cannot be seriously endangered by difficulties of detail; that when a man, basking in the sunshine, feels a sudden chill, it is more reasonable to suppose that a little cloud is passing over him than that there is no sun.

The influence of a gift like Faith on human prejudice need hardly be pointed out. Prejudice is the preoccupation of the mind by views which the heart takes kindly to. Prejudice is more than difficulty; it is mental attitude; it is, as it were, a form of intuition. And it may be dishonest. If prejudice be

dishonestly held, the gift of Faith, by disposing the heart to prefer the kingdom of God to the world and the flesh, tends indirectly to dissolve it. And if it be honest, the gift destroys it by, so to speak, altering its focus. The moment new truth can be got within the range of mental sight, or the sight itself be distracted to see otherwise than straight on in front, prejudice begins to die. And Faith helps prejudice to look over its gaol-wall; to note the disregarded fields and pastures on either side of its iron road; to catch sight of many a diamond lying in the dust of its own unwatered track; and when prejudice has thus been induced to admit there is goodness and truth elsewhere than it had all along taken for granted, the dawn of the day is not far off.

As for wilfulness—that moral obstacle which bars out Belief as the sand-bank blocks the harbor's mouth when the tide is low—the gift of Faith is given to destroy it utterly. The gift of Faith bends stubborn necks and bows down lofty thoughts. If Belief is an obedience, a captivity, a humbling of the heart, a gift was needed before Belief could be prevalent in the race of man. Belief is as much a moral act as it is an act of the intel-

ligence. It demands pious and devout submission to the teaching of God, humility and docility towards the voice of God's Church, and a sensitive search for, and joyful acceptance of, every jot and tittle of divinely-inspired or divinely-protected teaching. The heavenly gift of Faith is meant, not merely to sharpen the intellectual sight, but to fill the heart with worship.

When all these various conditions are combined—when proof and argument are steadily realised, when objections and difficulties are passed by, when preoccupying mental habits have been dissolved, when humility and piety reign in the will—then Belief is what is called firm. And firmness is the result of the gift of Faith. It is this great gift which enables the child whose brain has just matured enough to let its spirit act, to adhere without hesitation and without rashness to that 'form of words' which it has already made its own. It is this gift which makes the rude untaught poor, the working man, the poor man's wife, the millions of the fields and the streets, not only acquiesce in their faith, but cling to it, act upon it, fight for it, or die for it. It is this gift which brings the rich, the intellectual, and the

noble, in the flower of their age and the maturity of their powers, to the feet of men who are often their inferiors in everything but the being the dispensers of the mysteries of God. It is this gift which inspires a horror of heresy and a distrust of dogmatic science ; which secures a kindly reception for first tidings of the miraculous ; and which moves believers to reverence every utterance of Popes and pastors. It is this gift, often half smothered under a load of worldliness and vain solicitude, which lives in the hearts of Catholics, which prompts them to many a generous labor or sacrifice for the Church, which opens their ears to the word of God ; and brings them to the sacred tribunal and the holy table. It is the want of this gift of Faith which leaves clear-sighted men in unbelief, honest men in heresy, good-hearted men in antagonism to Catholicism, and proud men in darkness ; and it is the weakness of the gift which not unfrequently makes Catholics ashamed of their profession, or keeps them aloof from their pastors or their fellow-Catholics in sentiment or in practice. For Faith is the ‘victory which overcomes the world ;’ it is the precious root of life which

’ 1 John v. 5.

the Lord when He comes in the latter day shall hardly find, alas ! in all the earth.

Let no one, then, believer or unbeliever, forget that Faith is a gift of Jesus Christ. Let the Catholic who too often trifles with his Faith by indifference, by criticism, and by too 'liberal' views, remember that he is entirely in the hands of God. If the divine influx ceased, his Faith would wither up and be found no more. And let the honest inquirer be fully persuaded that the knowledge of history, of controversy, and of grammar is of little use without humility of mind, personal goodness, and earnest prayer. The object of these discourses has been to show that the preparation for Faith must be a preparation of the will ; that Faith is a moral and voluntary act, and not the necessary submission of the intelligence to overwhelming light ; that the Spirit of Faith is not that of criticism and discussion, but of captivity and obedience ; finally, that Faith is not an acquisition, but a gift. There has been no desire or intention of undervaluing study, research, and controversial writing or preaching ; in God's providence all these things are most valuable. But the light of the sun is of little use as long as the shutters are closed

And if I were asked for one royal road to the happiness of Faith, I should answer, with all the Saints, that it is prayer. No one who prays can be lost. God wishes all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. But He has not promised to save those who are so immersed in the pleasantness or the business of this life as to give Him no share in their thoughts and none of the worship which is His right. We must bow to His majesty and beg for His precious gift. We must make ourselves feel, with all the fervor of our heart, that we are helpless if He do not help us, and blind if He do not enlighten us. And He will hear the prayer of the humble heart. Be sure that He will hear. Whether it be that He gives us new reasons or helps us the better to penetrate old ones; whether he send us a man, or a book, or an inspiration; whether He cast us down as with a lightning stroke, or lay His hand gently upon our eyes and ears, let us be assured that He will hear us. If He must send His angel from the heavens to teach us, then His angel will be sent. But it is He alone, and not ourselves, who can open our eyes and let us see the light.

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